Hafa Adai! Happy New Year!

$1

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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PERSON OF THE YEAR

Elizabeth Pliscou; sisters Aria and Grace Keilbach

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

» 'Responding to a community need of reducing stray animals and providing animal services'

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."
—Mahatma Gandhi

When measured against Gandhi's yardstick for what makes a nation great, the CNMI may still have a long way to go, but the Commmonwealth has three outstanding women leading the way: Elizabeth Pliscou of Saipan Cares for Animals and sisters Aria and Grace Keilbach of Boonie Babies Saipan.

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LEIGH GASES
Elizabeth Pliscou, director of Saipan Cares for Animals, holds several cats available for adoption at the Saipan Cares for Animals Clinic on Middle Road.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Aria Keilbach, left, and Grace Keilbach show off several of Boonie Babies' foster dogs.

SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Marianas Creations

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Marianas Creations owner Elina Gharti Chhetri.

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Marianas Creations has served as a champion for artists and fellow entrepreneurs since opening in Garapan in 2019, with the café and mini pub living up to its primary aim of providing artists and entrepreneurs a creative space to express their talents.

"We have been hosting First Friday events where we change our theme every month to focus on different artists and their artwork. During these events we encourage our artists to meet their customers and share their passion for their work to

See BUSINESS on Page 4

GCEA thanks its partners for another year of progress toward economic recovery

TOGETHER, WE CAN

By MATTHEW DELEON GUERRERO
Special to the Saipan Tribune

As we mark the end of 2022, the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers looks back on a year of growing partnerships, greater community involvement, and a reinvigorated motivation to unlock the next chapter for the Marianas economy in this post-pandemic period for our world and our islands.

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Administrative leave today is cancelled. PAGE 7
Falling fuel prices result in lower FAC. PAGE 8

INSIDE

SCIENCE & TECH
Pig livers are being transformed to act like human ones, in a bid to ease the U.S.' transplant shortage.

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OFF THE WALL
The statue of a 19th-century California rancher and meat-packing magnate is decapitated.

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LIFE & STYLE
It's not on the level of a moon landing, but all you need say is "the slap" and people know what you mean.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Saipan Tribune will not be published on Jan. 2, 2023. We will resume publication on Jan. 3, 2023.

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2023
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Each year is a gift that holds hope for new adventures.
May your New Year be filled with exploration, discovery, and growth.
Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Local

A rearview look at some of the top stories of 2022

A dramatic November 2022 election

The hotly contested November 2022 general and gubernatorial runoff elections could've been likened to a television drama's season finale—full of drama, unpredictable, and full of twists.

Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and his running mate, Saipan Mayor David M. Apatang, of the unified independent team, eventually came out victorious by a big margin of 1,131 votes over Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and his running mate, Sen. Vinnie Vinson F. Sablan (R-Saipan), in the Nov. 25 gubernatorial runoff race.

In the Nov. 8 general election, Torres-Sablan topped the three-way gubernatorial race after garnering 5,728 total votes, or an 838-vote lead over Palacios-Apatang, which received 4,890 votes.

Since Torres-Sablan failed to get the majority votes after obtaining only 38.83% of the total votes, this paved the way for the Nov. 25 gubernatorial runoff race between Torres-Sablan and Palacios-Apatang.

In the CNMI's brief runoff election history, incumbent governors usually easily win the runoff election because some defeated gubernatorial candidates would throw their support behind the incumbents.

This year, Rep. Christina E. Sablan and her running mate, Rep. Leila F. Staffler, of the Democratic Party, which got 4,132 votes, immediately conceded defeat and supported the Palacios-Apatang team in the runoff race.

Many people believed that that development doomed the re-election of Torres. Surprisingly, Daniel Quitugua, a long-time chairman of the NMI Democratic Party, resigned from the Democratic Party and announced his support to Torres-Sablan. Andrew Salas, a defeated candidate for a Senate Saipan seat under Palacios-Apatang team, also threw his support for Torres-Sablan.

In the Nov. 25 runoff race, Palacios-Apatang swept the votes in all 10 precincts on Saipan and prevailed in absentee voting, and Rota, defeating Torres-Sablan by a large margin of 1,131 votes.

Palacios and Apatang will take their oath as governor and lieutenant governor, respectively, at the Jan. 9, 2023 inauguration. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Torres is acquitted

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres was acquitted in May of six Articles of Impeachment, after

four Republican senators voted "no" to the question whether there was clear and convincing evidence to warrant his removal from office.

Senate President Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian), Sens. Francisco Q. Cruz (R-Tinian), Karl King-Nabor (R-Tinian), and Victor B. Hocog (R-Rota) found Torres not guilty of corruption and neglect of duty charges, which the Democrats-Independents controlled House of Representatives filed against Torres.

Minority bloc senators Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota), Teresita A. Santos (Ind-Rota), and Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) all voted "yes" despite the fact that the trial proceeded without a House prosecutor to try the case and present evidence.

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Sens. Vinnie F. Sablan (R-Saipan) and Justo S. Quitugua recused themselves from participating in the Senate trial. Sablan was the running mate of Torres in the November gubernatorial election. The governor's maternal grandfather is Quitugua's mother's sibling.

Last Jan. 12, the House impeached Torres after passing House Resolution 22-14, which was introduced by Rep. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan), who chairs the Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee that investigated Torres' travels and expenditures of public funds. As of yesterday, the JGO Committee has yet to issue a report about the investigations. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

CNMI raised the bar with Pacific Mini Games

The long-awaited 11th edition of the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022, a nine-day sporting event from June 17 to 25 ended as spectacularly as it began. The first ever drone show signaled the start of the Games in its opening ceremony and a 20-minute or so fireworks display rocked the closing ceremony as the PMG flag was handed to Palau for the 2025 PMG. Even with many hindrances that postponed the Games to 2022 from the original date of 2017—Typhoon Soudelor in 2015, then Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018, and then the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic starting in 2020—the Pacific Games Council, along with the Mini Games Organizing Committee and the CNMI government, pushed through and made sure everything was ready for the CNMI to host its first ever PMG event.

In the medal tally after the Games, the CNMI placed third overall among the 20 participating countries, and collectively won 16 gold medals, 13 silver medals, and eight bronze medals, for a total of 38 medals. Rightfully, Pacific Games Council president Vidya Lakhan praised the CNMI during the closing ceremony at the Oleai Sports Complex for raising the bar in hosting the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022

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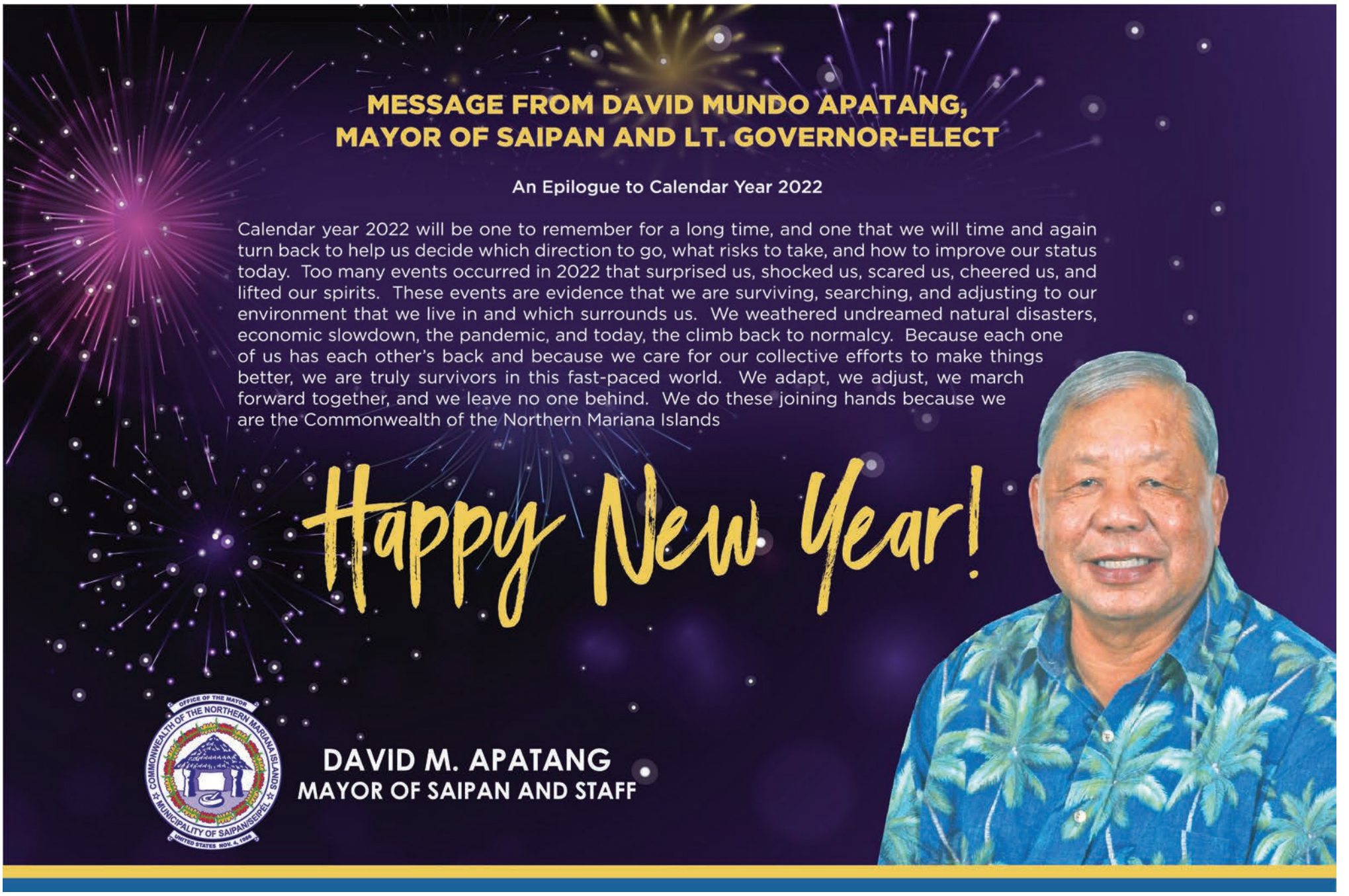
MESSAGE FROM DAVID MUNDO APATANG,
MAYOR OF SAIPAN AND LT. GOVERNOR-ELECT
An Epilogue to Calendar Year 2022
Calendar year 2022 will be one to remember for a long time, and one that we will time and again turn back to help us decide which direction to go, what risks to take, and how to improve our status today. Too many events occurred in 2022 that surprised us, shocked us, scared us, cheered us, and lifted our spirits. These events are evidence that we are surviving, searching, and adjusting to our environment that we live in and which surrounds us. We weathered undreamed natural disasters, economic slowdown, the pandemic, and today, the climb back to normalcy. Because each one of us has each other's back and because we care for our collective efforts to make things better, we are truly survivors in this fast-paced world. We adapt, we adjust, we march forward together, and we leave no one behind. We do these joining hands because we are the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Happy New Year!
DAVID M. APATANG
MAYOR OF SAIPAN AND STAFF

PERSON

From Page 1

They are not just championing the cause of stray animals in the CNMI and providing much needed and affordable veterinary services, but they are also teaching us to expand our capacity for love and care and for their herculean effort, they are our Person of the Year for 2022.

With the CNMI's human population around 58,000 and with currently an unknown number of stray animals on the islands, the progress that has been made by Saipan Cares for Animals and Boonie Babies Saipan in reducing the number of stray animals in the CNMI may be incremental but quite obvious to many long-term CNMI residents, who don't see as many roadkill now compared to the situation some 15 years ago when the sight was so commonplace that many just learned to ignore them.

By the last estimates of the Humane Society of the United States in 2014, there were between 10,000 to 20,000 stray dogs in the CNMI—and that number doesn't include stray cats. Many efforts were made to reduce their numbers, first with the Saipan Mayor's Office Dog Control Program, which started in 2010, but there still was no consistent, readily available, and affordable veterinary care.

Thankfully, Elizabeth Pliscou and her family moved to Saipan from California in 2012, bringing over her love for animals and prompting her to volunteer at the SCA shelter's first location in Lower Base.

Shortly after Typhoon Soudelor hit the CNMI in 2015, Pliscou took over SCA as director and president of its board and later, revived the organization from the condemned skeleton of the Lower Base facility, housed dogs in her previous home in San Antonio, then opened the first animal shelter/clinic in As Gonno to tackle the stray animal population and provide the community with veterinary services that it clearly lacked.

Even with the many typhoons that have pounded the islands and the pandemic that ravaged the community for more than two years beginning in 2020, SCA managed to keep their doors open and continued to provide affordable care and veterinary services, along with housing stray animals in their shelter.

Fast-forward to 2022, SCA and their volunteer veterinarians have already spayed and neutered over 4,500 cats and dogs in their five-plus years of operation, based on an estimate by Pliscou.

The SCA Clinic on Middle Road opened this year in March and has been serving the community with longer hours at a more central location. They provide primary care for cats and dogs such as deworming, vaccination, flea and tick prevention, and mange treatment for dogs; and emergency care for dogs with tick disease, animals who have been hit by cars, cuts or wounds from fighting, and sickly or animals that are not eating.

But, with the highs also came many lows, and with the roadblocks and hindrances that SCA has gone through in the past year with finding and running a permanent animal shelter, Pliscou came up with what she calls a "virtual animal shelter," after the physical shelter in As Gonno closed in April.

In this way, instead of SCA sheltering and taking in stray dogs and cats, it will be the community that will "step in and do the sheltering part," while SCA will focus on offering free vaccines, the anti-worm medication Bravecto, tick and worm medication, and spay and neuter surgery for its rescues. This came about with the realization that people chipping in to help and house strays was beneficial for the staff and the community as a whole.

Since the virtual shelter's inception, Pliscou said the community has been welcoming, with over 300 cats and dogs now placed in more than 150 families' homes.

And, this year, despite fighting to keep their doors open, countless have benefitted from the volunteer veterinarians that have graced SCA—Jessica Johnson, who came in April to provide low-cost services, then last June, with the help of the U.S. Army's Innovative Readiness Training program or IRT, a free veterinarian outreach that serviced over 300 pet cats and dogs. Next July, the U.S. Army will be back to assist SCA, and will concurrently extend their veterinary and sterilizing services to Rota and Tinian.

Pliscou hopes to leave the clinic running in capable hands and, with eight staff members and four volunteers or sometimes more, it is possible that one day, she will just focus on writing grants for the clinic and the virtual shelter.

Already one staff member, Austin Arriola, who has worked at SCA for over four years, is trained in neutering male cats to help the need for sterilization services. Pliscou said it's gotten to the point where he takes over suturing and she wouldn't need to do it anymore. "It just worked into that, because eventually I want to retire and I want to pass this all along to the local people that are going to be here permanently to keep it going," said Pliscou.

Pliscou credits SCA's success to APEC Construction, Brabu Pharmacy, Ted Parker on the SCA board, and Dr. David Grauman and his wife, Beth.

"[Dr. Grauman] is someone who's really managed to help us in a pinch when I thought we were going to close or that this wasn't going to work several times. He wouldn't want me to announce it on Facebook, but I think his name should be somewhere. ...He's really responsible for keeping us open when I really didn't know what to do," said Pliscou. Also "a big thank you to the people who've taken in animals in our virtual shelter. It's really been huge, really successful. I'll just keep trying to get vets and get more services."

When asked about their relationship with another animal welfare and rescue group, Boonie Babies Saipan, Pliscou said that they work together, with their partnership going back to the shelter in As Gonno.

"When the sisters [Aria and Grace Keilbach] would bring in dogs for vaccinations or emergencies…and when they received grants or something, they would just put money in PayPal to help us out. …They would also come in here with their puppies and dogs that need to be cleaned up and they don't pay anything. …We just agreed to that. …If a litter of puppies comes in right now, they're the first people I'll call, even though I know they're full, but they will try and do whatever they can."

By the same token, 20-year-old Aria and 22-year-old Grace Keilbach—Colorado natives and co-founders of their nonprofit organization—continue their mission to rescue, educate, rehabilitate, and relocate what are colloquially know as "boonie" dogs, since founding the group on Saipan in 2018. They have since rescued over 300 stray dogs and cats from the streets of Saipan.

This past year, though, was a big one for the organization. "Boonie Babies has had the first of many major accomplishments that have greatly impacted the community. None of our accomplishments would have been possible without our nonprofit status and officially becoming a licensed business. We worked hard all year to make this possible and take our organization to the next level. As an official nonprofit organization in the CNMI, we are now working to apply for grants, partner more with the government and community, and overall expand our outreach," said Aria.

Along with becoming a nonprofit last October, Boonie Babies Saipan hosted its first ever spay and neuter clinic in cooperation with the Saipan Mayor's Office dog shelter, during which 500 dogs and cats were serviced on Saipan and Tinian from Aug. 18, 2022, to Sept. 16, 2022.

They have also established a foster rehabilitation center, in which 62 dogs are currently cared for; hosted volunteers from around the world "whose dedication and time has allowed us to significantly expand our impact; worked with rescues on other islands such as the Boonie Flight Project in Guam; and secured a charter flight for dogs headed to the U.S. mainland for adoption this January, which is something we have worked on for the past three years."

Aria said their efforts to have their dogs adopted in the U.S. mainland has hit a rough spot due to United Airline's suspension of its PetSafe Travel program. Because of the program's suspension, "flying dogs off island has been nearly impossible. However, we have worked with private pet shipping companies [in] Guam and the Boonie Flight Project to relocate a total of 10 dogs over the past three years. This is not a sustainable or feasible option for us anymore due to cost and importation regulations [in] Guam. We are therefore working to expand our options for off-island pet transportation, which will hopefully be accessible to the general public as well sometime this upcoming year."

Boonie Babies has also grown their following across all their social media platforms, with over 421,000 followers from all over the world.

When asked about their future plans, Aria said, "Our future plans are to continue our mission to save the boonies through spay and neuter efforts, rescue and rehabilitation, and making off-island transportation easily accessible. Overall, we hope to further expand our impact and outreach across the CNMI and Guam."

On opening a physical shelter, she said "Although we would love to open a shelter, our main focus is ending the stray dog population. We feel that a shelter would become a dumping ground for the public's unwanted animals instead of a sustainable adoption facility."

"The fact of the matter is that there are not enough people on the island willing to adopt for a shelter to be successful. Due to irresponsible breeding of dogs such as 'Maltese' and 'Pitbulls' as well as the idea that boonie dogs cannot be pets, it is extremely difficult to find homes on island."

"As we work to educate the community and shift this mindset, we would be open to operating a shelter and working with the government to promote animal welfare and sustainable solutions," added Aria.

There are many ways to help their organization by donating, fostering, volunteering, adopting, supporting, following their social media, or something they call "Borrow a Boonie," in which an individual can borrow a dog for activities such as going for walks to the park, or going for a swim at the beach.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

BUSINESS

From Page 1

the community," said Marianas Creations owner Elina Gharti Chhetri.

This way the community feels more connected to local artists' hard work and that in turn will make them appreciate them more, Chhetri said.

"We also do paint night where we offer simple painting classes for anyone to learn some basic painting skills. They get to meet the artists in person and if they wish to continue learning more they can sign up for monthly classes with the artists," she added.

This socio-civic mindedness and effort to embrace the arts in the community they serve were just some of the reasons why *Saipan Tribune* hailed Marianas Creations its Small Business of the Year for 2022.

Marianas Creations' activities are not limited to the visual arts alone. Chhetri said their open mic night is another great event.

"It's when we host musicians, performers, and writers to get the feel of the stage and practice their work in front of the community. Fellow artists/performers can share their experiences and help each other through their creative journey. We provide mic, mic stands, sound box, TV, etc. for artists to perform," she said.

The genesis of Marianas Creations' affinity for artists is because Chhetri herself is one. "As an artist myself I understand the struggles of creative entrepreneurs who are trying to follow their passion in our small community. I wanted to give all the creative entrepreneurs a safe space where they don't have to compete with other big factory-made products. Some of these events are also designed for new creative entrepreneurs to practice their work in a real environment. I love watching a new artist moving their passion into a business idea and turning their business idea into a successful business under our roof."

As for its future plans for further promoting the arts, Marianas Creations will be adding a few other classes for the community to take advantage of. Chhetri said they will be announcing them through newspapers or through their social media accounts.

As for helping local small businesses like them, Marianas Creations always gives them a solid by having a CNMI-only products policy at its store and gallery.

"That way our local artists from Saipan, Tinian, and Rota don't have to compete with other factory-made low-quality products. We also work to educate our customers on the importance of buying local."

Among the bestsellers at Marianas Creations' store and gallery are Tinian hot pepper sauces and Spondylus jewelry from different artists.

Marianas Creations currently sells locally-made products at their physical store and gallery everyday. They've recently started selling through their website so customers from off-island can also access the beautiful work of local artists.

"Other special events are hosted every week or once a month. To keep updated about these events, people can follow us on our social media or they can check our website for detailed information."

Their support of locally made products also extends to their operations as a 60-seater cafe and mini-pub.

"We also focus on selling coffee and we use coffee from a local business on the island instead of shipping it from outside. We also make refreshing home-made sodas from locally sourced ingredients such as local calamansi soda, local cucumber soda, local ginger soda, etc. Products you will find at our store are hard to find in other establishments on Saipan," said Chhetri.

Like other businesses on the island, Marianas Creations wasn't immune to the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic. "The pandemic hasn't been easy for our business. Lots of our main products or items have been changed. We have learned to adapt accordingly. We have made lots of changes to our business plans and we will keep making changes according to the market change."

Chhetri added that while the effects of COVID-19 have somewhat waned with the relaxing of restrictions, the next item on the agenda is reviving the CNMI's tourism industry.

"Right now the biggest challenge is the reduced tourism in the CNMI… but for most small businesses the biggest challenge is usually administrative—getting the right permits, paying taxes, accounting, etc."

Marianas Creations is open Mondays to Saturdays, from 11am to 9pm. They are located along Micro Beach Road, beside Everest Restaurant. For more information, contact them at (670) 783-1924, marianascreations670@gmail.com, or through their Facebook and Instagram accounts.

2022

From Page 3

after overcoming many challenges. Over 1,800 athletes, officials, media, volunteers, and supporters of the 20 Pacific island nations, along with over 1,000 community members that crowded inside the sports complex and at the adjacent beach, banded together to witness a historic first in the CNMI. ***(Leigh Gases)***

Criminal suit launched against Torres

The Office of the Attorney General filed a criminal lawsuit against Gov. Ralph DLG Torres last April, alleging theft, misconduct in public office, and contempt.

According to the lawsuit, Attorney General Edward Manibusan, through Chief Solicitor Robert Glass Jr., is alleging 12 counts of misconduct in public office and one count of theft relating to the issuance of airline tickets for business class, first class, or other premium class travel for himself and/or first lady Diann T. Torres. The case also alleges one count of contempt for failure to appear in compliance with a subpoena issued by a CNMI House of Representatives committee.

Following numerous motions seeking to dismiss the case, or to dismiss the prosecutors and defense attorneys, Superior Court judge pro temp Alberto Tolentino dismissed the contempt charges against Torres.

The case remains pending with a tentative jury trial date set for February 2023. ***(Kimberly B. Esmores)***

Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan opens

Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan was officially unveiled to the public on Oct. 31 with a grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony at the newly revamped hotel in the presence of ranking Commonwealth officials in both the public and private sectors. This was the third iteration for the hotel that was initially called the Da-Ichi Hotel, and then became the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan, after which it went through several months of renovations that cost a total of $43 million and transformed the property into the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan—a modern, island-inspired oasis with 422 rooms and five restaurants, all under the management of IHG Hotels & Resorts. Set to open in January 2023 are the Mai Teppanyaki and the Ataari Dinner Show. The resort remains a Tan Holdings Corp. property. In the grand opening ceremony, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and first lady Diann Torres were joined by, among others, Tan Holdings president and CEO Jerry Tan, his wife, Lydia Tan, Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan general manager Robert Coates, Bishop Ryan Jimenez of the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa, and House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) in cutting the ribbon that signaled the official opening of the resort. The occasion was also attended by key Crowne Plaza Resort and Intercontinental Hotel Group management that included Abhijay Sandilya, managing director of IGH Japan, and Thomas Mayrhofer, regional general manager of Crowne Plaza Resort Guam & Saipan. ***(Leigh Gases)***

PSS returns to face-to-face classes

With the CNMI reaching a 94% rate of vaccinations at the time, Jan. 3, 2022, marked the date when the CNMI's Public School System finally returned to normal face-to-face classes, with elementary schools and high schools returning to full in-person learning, while middle schools were on a cohort schedule until Jan. 10. An exception was made for Hopwood Middle School, which remained on a double session schedule.

The return to full in-person classes was made during a Board of Education meeting on Dec. 28, 2021, during which Education Commissioner Dr. Alfred B. Ada announced that PSS' health professionals and PSS' partners at the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. agreed that the CNMI's high vaccination rate ensured a safe return to full in-person classes for PSS' secondary and elementary school students.

Faced with the hesitancy of several students and parents when discussing the return of in-person classes, Ada and PSS worked closely with hesitant students and parents to assure them that adequate safety measures are in place in PSS schools.

The opening of the 2022-23 school year was also a watershed moment, when face masks became optional for all PSS campuses. However, PSS "highly encouraged" its stakeholders—teachers, staff, students, and parents—to consider their personal level of risk when deciding on mask-wearing. During that time, PSS' schools and departments reached a 90%-plus vaccination rate, and in collaboration with local health partners, PSS opened up opportunities for testing and vaccination at certain school sites on a quarterly basis. ***(Chrystal Marino)***

Dead body found in CK

The body of a man was found in a vacant lot near a market in Chalan Kanoa last Dec. 2, already in an advanced stage of decomposition.

The body of Damian Wenio was found decomposing in the jungles of the vacant lot next to Triple J Truckload Store earlier this month.

To date, an autopsy has yet to be conducted on Wenio's body so the case remains under investigation.

However, from the state in which the body was found, the Department of Public Safety believes he died of natural causes. ***(Kimberly B. Esmores)***

Two lethal stabbings seen in 2022

The year 2022 saw multiple murders, with two stabbings seen within the first half of the year.

On Jan. 1, the CNMI rung in the New Year with its first fatal stabbing.

Kong Ling Yang, 34, is currently facing charges of second-degree murder, assault with a dangerous weapon, and assault and battery after allegedly fatally stabbing Li SongZhi multiple times, killing him last Jan. 1.

Meanwhile, in another stabbing case, Huang Rui

Continued on Next Page

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Jun, 49, has pleaded guilty to one count of voluntary manslaughter, and one count of aggravated assault and battery for stabbing two others back in May at the Paseo de Marianas. ***(Kimberly B. Esmores)***

Return of community events

After a two-year hiatus caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the year 2022 saw the full-fledged and "un-masked" return of major events in the CNMI such as the Flame Tree Arts Festival, the Taste of the Marianas, Liberation Day celebrations, and welcomed the Fiesta Friday as a weekly community event.

■ 41st Flame Tree Festival

Not only did the 41st Flame Tree Arts Festival celebrate the CNMI's arts this year, but it was also held in memory of the CNMI's artists who have passed away in the past two years. The late artists and their families were recognized at the opening ceremony, with promises to keep their memories and legacies alive. The three-day festival—held from April 29 to May 1—was also noted as the first festival of its kind to be held at the Sugar King Park and the adjoining CNMI Museum grounds in Garapan—a change from previous festivals that were either held at the Civic Center in Susupe or the American Memorial Park in Garapan. The new location meant that a section of Middle Road had to be closed to traffic. The event saw more than a thousand people from Saipan, Tinian, and Rota gather together in celebration of the arts, live performances, and food. There was also a sizeable delegation from Rota. The festival's theme "Healing Through Arts"—was also fitting, given what the CNMI community has gone through the past two years with the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's Flame Tree Arts Festival was considered as the 39th, 40th, and 41st editions. More uniquely, this year's edition consisted of a combined arts festival and a ukulele festival.

■ 23rd Taste of the Marianas

Usually held in May, the Taste of the Marianas this year was moved to June to coincide with the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games and offer another tourist attraction for many visiting athletes, officials, and families from the 20 visiting countries participating in the Games, as well as continuing the annual celebration of local taste among community members.

This year's event was larger than the last, with a total of 29 food vendors, four beverage vendors, arts and crafts, and nonprofit groups. Along with that were 30 groups that separately performed at the festival, with the island dances also promoting the CNMI culture to visiting individuals. *Saipan Tribune* spoke with several people visiting the CNMI during the event, and they were impressed by the flavors the CNMI offered, but most appreciated the fact that they were welcomed by residents. Another main highlight was that all social distancing and the wearing of face masks were made optional, and many residents were seen walking mask-free. The festival was held on June 18, 19, 24, 25, and 26, 2022, from 5pm to 10pm at Garapan Fishing Base in Kristo Rai.

■ Liberation Day

This year's Liberation Day festivities celebrated not only the 2022 festivities but also recognized the past two years that were uncelebrated. Held at the Garapan Fishing Base in Kristo Rai, the five-night celebration culminated on July 4 with the Liberation Day parade down Beach Road.

More than 60 businesses had booths at the festival grounds, giving the event a variety and mixture of both food and merchandise stalls, as well as amusement stalls. Many families, as well as individuals, could be seen enjoying the festivities.

The theme of this year's event was "Honoring Our Legacy While Riding the Waves of Change," and concluded with a 30-minute fireworks display at the Garapan Fishing Base. In the Best Float competition, a total amount of $15,500 was given in prize money to the 10 groups whose floats won in the 2022 Liberation Day Parade contest. Saipan Mayor David M. Apatang presented the prizes to the awardees at his office in Susupe a couple of days after the parade. The Commonwealth Bureau of Military Affairs' float depiction of "Camp Susupe" took first place.

■ Fiesta Fridays

Kicking off the start of a weekly community event, Fiesta Friday started this year on Sept. 9, 2022. On the first of the many Fiesta Fridays to come, the event's starting night welcomed a crowd of over 400 people at its venue at the NMI Museum grounds, and since then, each Friday has accommodated a steady stream of folks at the grounds since. The NMI Museum remains the host of this event. ***(Chrystal Marino)***

Rep. Camacho arrested

Rep. Vicente Camacho (D-Saipan) was arrested for allegedly assaulting Commonwealth Ports Authority employee Steve Koch.

According to Koch, Camacho conspired with two others to assault him while on an evening walk with his daughter.

A temporary restraining order was taken out against Camacho while the case remains pending with the Superior Court. ***(Kimberly B. Esmores)***

Sale of IPI gaming equipment proceeds

The receivership against Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC pushed through last October, with the sale of IPI properties netting over $700,000.

Last October, the U.S. District Court for the NMI instructed court-appointed receiver Clear Management Ltd., to proceed with the auction of IPI's gaming equipment with the first auction closing on Oct. 7.

To date, two auctions have concluded, netting over $700,000.

The next series of auctions is set to conclude in January. ***(Kimberly B. Esmores)***

Name: Chao, Kuok Wai
Saipan, MP 96950
Phone: (670) 286-8899
(670) 785-6628

Pro Se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Chao, Kuok Wai Petitioner, vs. Respondent, : FCD-CN CIVIL ACTION NO. 22-0301 : **ORDER SHORTENING TIME AND NOTICE OF HEARING**

GOOD CAUSE APPEARING, it is hereby ordered that the time for notice of hearing for Petitioner/Respondent's petition be shortened and that the hearing be set on January 18, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. in Courtroom.

Dated this 29th day of December, 2022.

/s/
Judge

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
RFP23-CHCC/FACILITY-002

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: JAN. 3rd 2023 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

"WATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE SERVICES FOR THE HOSPITAL AND HEMODIALYSIS"

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.HEALTH]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS** TAB OF THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL. IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
RFP23-CHCC/ELC-EDE-005
EPIDEMIOLOGY AND LABORATORY CAPACITY (ELC) PROGRAM – ENHANCING DETECTION EXPANSION (EDE)

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: JAN. 16TH, 2023 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

"LABORATORY RENOVATION / IMPROVEMENT PROJECT"
(Coordinate, Design, Oversight Monitoring and Construction)
for CHC Hospital /Public Health Laboratory Department

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.HEALTH]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS** TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL. IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

ESTATE OF JUAN DIEGO CAMACHO BLANCO, Deceased. : **Civil Action NO. 22-0005** : **ORDER REGARDING PUBLICATION AND SETTING STATUS CONFERENCE**

Administratrix's filed her Motion for Order Setting Time to Hear Claims of Heirship and Deadline for Filing Claims of Heirship on December 15, 2022.

Any heirship claim shall be filed on before February 28, 2023. A copy of this Order shall be published at least two times in two papers of general circulation in the Proof of service of the publication shall be filed with the Court.

A copy of this Order shall also be served on all the known heirs. Proof of service shall also be filed with the Court.

The Court sets a **Status Conference on March 16, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. in Courtroom 220A**. All parties are ordered to appear.

IT IS SO ORDERED this 22nd day of

/s/
JOSEPH N. CAMACHO, Associate Judge

MICHAEL A. WHITE, ESQ., F-0122
THE LAW OFFICES OF MICHAEL A. WHITE, LLC
POST OFFICE BOX 5222
SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS 96950
TEL: (670) 234-6547 | FAX: (670) 234-9537
ATTORNEY FOR Plaitiffs

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

DEELYN MANOSHI CAMACHO KEREMIUS, VINCENT ANTHONY CAMACHO KEREMIUS AND JOHN CHRISTIAN CAMACHO KEREMIUS, Plaintiffs, -v- BERNARD FRANCIS KEREMIUS and MSJ, LLC, Defendants. : **CIVIL ACTION NO. 22-0085**

FIRST AMENDED SUMMONS

TO THE ABOVE-NAMED DEFENDANTS:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and notified to file any answer you wish to make to the Complaint, a copy of which is given you herewith, within twenty-one (21) days after service of this Summons upon you, and to deliver or mail a copy of your answer to THE LAW OFFICES OF MICHAEL A. WHITE, LLC, the Plaintiff's attorneys, whose address is Post Office Box 5222, Saipan, MP 96950, as soon as practicable after filing your answer or sending it to the Clerk of Courts for filing.

Your answer should be in writing and filed with the Clerk of this Court at Susupe, Saipan. It may be prepared and signed for you by your counsel and sent to the Clerk of this Court by messenger or mail. It is not necessary for you to appear personally until further notice.

If you fail to answer in accordance with this Summons, judgment by default may be taken against you for your relief demanded in the Complaint.

By order of the above Court:

/s/
Clerk of Court

Dated, this 22nd day of August, 2022.

Robert Tenorio Torres
Attorney at Law
Plata Drive, Whispering Palms (Chalan Kiya)
P.O. Box 500730, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 234-7859 | Fax. (670) 234-5749

Attorney for Plaintiff Bank of Guam

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

BANK OF GUAM, Plaintiff, vs. DAISY O. SANTOS, Defendant. : **Civil Action No. 11-0201** : **ORDER AFTER HEARING ON MOTION FOR AN ORDER IN AID OF JUDGMENT**

Next Court
Date: January 18, 2023
Time: 9 am
Judge: Naraja

This matter came for hearing on October 26, 2022 at 9 am. Robert T. Torres appeared for Plaintiff. Defendant did not appear following the Court's Order to serve Defendant by publication, such publication having been duly noticed per the Court's order.

For cause shown, Defendant is ordered to appear. The matter is continued to January 18, 2023 at 9 am. Defendant shall appear and may do so via telephone or video in coordination with the Court. On failure to appear the Court may issue a Bench Warrant for her arrest/detention.

SO ORDERED.

/s/
Robert C. Naraja
Presiding Judge

Senate honors 2021 Miss Marianas with a resolution

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
2021 Miss Marianas, Savannah Delos Santos, center, is presented with Senate Resolution 22-30 by the Senate during a regular session on Wednesday.

2021 Miss Marianas Savannah Lyn Delos Santos was presented with Senate resolution last Wednesday that praises her performance at the 60th Miss International Beauty Pageant last on Dec. 13 in Tokyo, Japan.

The resolution, Senate Resolution 22-30, which was presented to Delos Santos at the Senate's chambers, recognizes and commends her service and representation of the CNMI at the 60th Miss International Beauty Pageant, where Delos Santos was chosen among the Top 15, the highest level the CNMI has achieved thus far in an international pageant.

Part of the resolution said that, "through her ongoing active role in the community and abroad, Savannah Lyn Delos Santos has humbly showcased the beauty of our people and the colors of the islands through her admirable representation of the CNMI."

She was joined by her mother, Elena, friends, and coworkers from the Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence at the Senate resolution presentation.

Delos Santos, who is a Sexual Assault Response team manager at the coalition, later told *Saipan Tribune* that she was "so happy" to learn that she would be presented with the resolution. "When Peachy Quitugua, the former [2016] Miss Marianas Queen, and Sen. Vinnie Sablan reached out to me about the Senate resolution, I was so speechless. … They were so proud of our placement in the Top 15. We garnered 30,265 votes and made history as the first and only delegate from the Northern Marianas to place as a semifinalist in Miss International history. They were also so proud that I was the first ever Miss CNMI to visit the Northern Islands."

As to what's next, she said the Senate resolution is just the beginning. "I'm grateful for the honor, but this Senate resolution is just an indicator that there is more work to be done. Serving my community and the world is in my blood and part of who I am."

The 2021 Miss Marianas placed in the Top 15 of the 60th Miss International Beauty Pageant 2022 at the Tokyo Dome City Hall in Tokyo, Japan, last Dec. 13.

Delos Santos was crowned the 2021 Miss Marianas on March 13, 2021.

Admin leave today is cancelled

The administrative leave for non-essential Executive Branch employees that was initially approved for today has been cancelled to allow these government entities to complete much-needed work before the holidays.

The CNMI Office of the Governor issued a memorandum yesterday informing them that non-essential employees of the Executive Branch would not be required to work today in recognition of New Year's Day. However, just an hour later, the memorandum was recalled, and a mass email was issued stating that today would be a regular workday and all employees must report to work.

"Please be advised that the administrative leave memorandum dated Dec. 29, regarding administrative leave on Dec. 30, is to be recalled and disregarded, effective immediately. We thank everyone for their hard work this past year, and would like to kindly advise the Commonwealth government Executive Branch's non-essential employees that there will be work [today], Dec. 30," said the email

According to Brianna Hunter, Office of the Governor acting special assistant for communications, the cancellation is because government offices will be closed on Monday.

"I was advised to recall [the administrative leave] because information came in from some departments and agencies that they need the workday to continue services both within the government and for the public, considering the holiday on Monday will be taking away a day of work," she said. ***(Kimberly B. Esmores)***

NISSAN
NISSAN YEAR END CLEARANCE SALE
NISSAN INTELLIGENT MOBILITY

2022 NISSAN FRONTIER S 2WD

STOCK	MODEL	RETAIL PRICE	DISCOUNTED PRICE
NN613303	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER S 2WD	$41,995	$36,995
NN641771	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER S 2WD	$43,995	$38,995
NN649462	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER S 2WD	$44,995	$39,995
~~NN651513~~	~~2022 NISSAN FRONTIER S 2WD~~ SOLD	~~$44,995~~	~~$39,995~~
NN656678	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER S 2WD	$44,995	$39,995
NN661007	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER S 2WD	$44,995	$39,995
NN668211	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER S 2WD	$44,995	$39,995

2022 NISSAN FRONTIER SV 4WD

STOCK	MODEL	RETAIL PRICE	DISCOUNTED PRICE
NN614917	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER SV 4WD	$58,695	$52,695
NN614975	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER SV 4WD	$58,695	$52,695
NN606076	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER SV 4WD	$58,695	$52,695
NN606093	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER SV 4WD	$58,695	$52,695
NN614623	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER SV 4WD	$58,695	$52,695
NN650083	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER SV 4WD	$58,995	$52,995

2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO-X 2WD

STOCK	MODEL	RETAIL PRICE	DISCOUNTED PRICE
NN605672	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO-X 2WD	$57,595	$51,595
NN600992	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO-X 2WD	$57,595	$51,595
NN662557	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO-X 2WD	$57,595	$51,595
NN674886	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO-X 2WD	$57,595	$51,595

2022 NISSAN FRONTIER SV 2WD

STOCK	MODEL	RETAIL PRICE	DISCOUNTED PRICE
NN670419	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER SV 2WD	$47,995	$42,995
NN632998	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER SV 2WD	$48,995	$43,995
NN612894	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER SV 2WD	$48,995	$43,995
NN615459	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER SV 2WD	$53,995	$48,995
NN641679	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER SV 2WD	$54,995	$49,995

2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO4X

STOCK	MODEL	RETAIL PRICE	DISCOUNTED PRICE
~~PN600803~~	~~2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO4~~ SOLD	~~$62,995~~	~~$57,995~~
NN673939	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO4X	$54,995	$49,995
NN681746	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO4X	$54,995	$49,995
NN681425	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO4X	$54,995	$49,995

2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO4X 4WD

STOCK	MODEL	RETAIL PRICE	DISCOUNTED PRICE
NN675521	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO4X 4WD	$54,995	$48,995
NN674452	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO4X 4WD	$54,995	$48,995
NN641691	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO4X 4WD	$57,995	$51,995
NN606221	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO4X 4WD	$60,995	$54,995
NN669461	2022 NISSAN FRONTIER PRO4X 4WD	$61,995	$55,995

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2022 Nissan Frontier S RWD at $36,995 with 20% down at 5.89% APR for 72 months at 26 pay periods, O.A.C. deferred financing $32,051. See dealer for details.

Falling fuel prices result in lower FAC

Good news for Commonwealth Utilities Corp. customers this new year—the public can expect to see a lower electric bill this January.

A news release yesterday stated that CUC's fuel supplier, Mobil Oil Mariana Islands, Inc., has notified it that there has been a decrease in the average international fuel oil prices that will affect the Fuel Adjustment Charge. As a result, the current FAC rate will be reduced by 4.4 cents ($0.0437) from $0.32360 per kilowatt-hour to $0.27989 per kWh effective Jan. 1, 2023.

The FAC is one of two components that make up the CUC electric kWh rate, which is used to purchase fuel. The second component is the CUC base rate, which is used to fund operations, projects, and debt service. This base rate has not been increased since April 17, 2014.

CUC is required, pursuant to an order previously issued by the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, to adjust (up or down) the FAC pass-through rate when the Mean of Platts Singapore monthly pricing provided by Mobil equals or exceeds a 4.5% differential of the average per gallon cost of fuel used in the calculation of the current FAC rate. ***(Saipan Tribune/PR)***

Public warned vs dangerous jellyfish, rough seas

The public is being warned that dangerous Indo-Pacific man-o-wars, large breaking waves of 7 to 9 feet, and dangerous rip currents are present on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota beaches until Sunday. A small craft advisory remains in effect until 6am Monday.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center - State Warning Point, beach hazards from Indo-Pacific man-o-wars jellyfish is in effect through Sunday afternoon. A high surf advisory remains in effect in north facing reefs until 6am today, Friday, while the high risk of rip currents is present in north and east facing reefs through late Sunday night. The warning against Indo-Pacific man-o-wars applies to all beaches and surf zone until Sunday.

A small craft advisory means that wind speeds of 21 to 33 knots are expected to produce wave conditions hazardous to small craft.

These factors will create dangerous swimming and surfing conditions and localized beach erosion. Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water. Contact with Indo- Pacific man-o-wars, alive or dead, can cause extreme pain and may be fatal in some cases.

Hazardous surf and a high rip current risk will be along north facing reefs of the Marianas. A high rip current risk will be along east facing reefs of the Marianas through Sunday night, which could be extended further.

Man-o-wars have been reported washed up on north facing beaches in Guam. Man-o-wars may still be found on beaches and the waters of the Marianas.

The public is advised to stay out of the water along all reef lines. Swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. Remain out of the water to avoid hazardous swimming conditions. Even if men- o-war are not found along the beach, they could still be out in the water. Avoid making contact with men-o-war that have washed up on beaches, especially when bubbles can be seen.

Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid boating in these conditions. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BID
CUC-IFB-23-003

SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF MEDIUM-DUTY BOOM TRUCK VEHICLE

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the supply and delivery of a medium-duty boom truck for the Power Plant in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked ***"CUC-IFB-23-003, Supply and Delivery of a Medium Duty Boom Truck"*** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 4, 2023** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before the due date and time or post-marked before the submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification should be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid or supply under the contract. The IFB does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the bid under this request, or to procure or contract for goods. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on December 19, 2022,** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC's Purchasing Administrator, via email manny.sablan@cucgov.org with copies to Jubal Slayer, CUC's Technical Manager for Oil via email at jubal.slayer@cucgov.org and Christie L. Sablan, CUC's Senior Administrative Technician at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in the said bids, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids submitted shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BID
CUC-IFB-23-012

Carbon Change Out of Granular Activated Carbon Filters (10 Sites)

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for Carbon Change Out of Granular Activated Carbon Filters (10 Sites) in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The intent of the contract is for the Contractor to provide all labor, equipment, supplies, and materials necessary for the removal and installation of GAC and Gravel media replacement, disposal of spent GAC and Gravel media, possible sample collection, transportation, and the possible supply of gravel media, analyses of spent media, and additional waste containers/drums for disposal, if necessary. CUC requires the Project to be completed in 180 calendar days from date of award of contract.

The project is funded by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of **$200.00** (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **December 28, 2022 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "**CUC-IFB-23-012, Carbon Change Out of Granular Activated Carbon Filters (10 Sites)"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 17, 2023,** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the Unites States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. A Payment Bond of One Hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 a.m. (ChST) on January 4, 2023** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Nicolette Villagomez, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer via email address nicolette.villagomez@cucgov.org and to Christie Sablan, P&S, Senior Administrative Technician – christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

2023
Happy
New Year!
Sending warm regards and hopes for
a wonderful and successful New Year and
wishing everyone a year full of blessings
and filled with prosperity and good health.
50
ANNIVERSARY
One Boat, One Team, One Vision
Tan Holdings
HEALTH
IS
WEALTH
Tan Siu Lin
Foundation

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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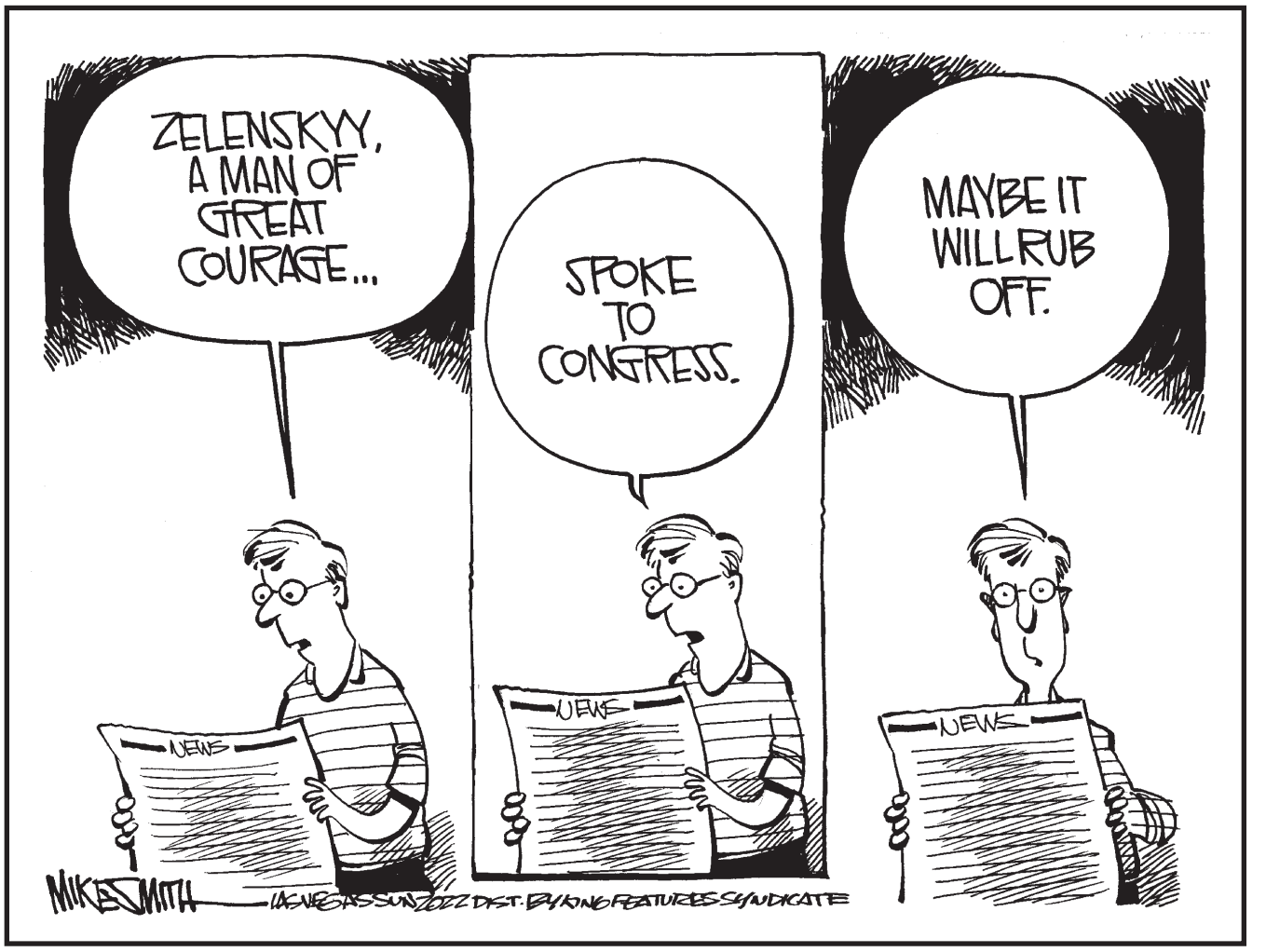

EDITORIAL

Question of why the IRS failed to audit Trump's taxes remains unanswered

A gaping question remains to be answered following the House Ways and Means Committee's decision to release Donald Trump's tax returns: Why did the Internal Revenue Service fail to audit Trump's taxes during the first two years of his presidency, as required by law? There's a growing mountain of circumstantial evidence suggesting that Trump used political pressure and strategic appointments of loyalists to block IRS auditors from doing their job.

If that's the case, it would hardly be surprising, given Trump's track record. But it would mean that someone, somewhere, violated the law, possibly at Trump's behest. Either way, the matter requires further investigation—a dubious prospect by the House as it transitions from Democratic to Republican control.

The most probable choice for the next House speaker, Trump loyalist Kevin McCarthy, is on record as having repeatedly railed against beefed-up IRS staffing, portraying the agency in evil-versus-good terms. It's as if he thinks it's a crime for the agency to pursue Americans who evade paying the taxes they owe. McCarthy falsely asserts there's a Democrat plot to deploy a "new army of 87,000 IRS agents" to target Americans with incomes of less than $75,000.

The ones who are most abusing the law are the nation's richest—people like Trump—whose tax-skirting exploits have robbed the national treasury of an estimated $7 trillion over the past decade, according to The New York Times. A major part of the problem is that the IRS is ridiculously understaffed, even at its current level of 80,000 total employees, the same staffing level it had in 1970. Since then, the ranks of billionaires has grown exponentially, and they hire expensive accounting firms to identify every loophole possible to help their clients escape paying their fair share. Trump's 2017 tax reform made it even easier for the rich to avoid paying taxes.

Trump managed to pay zero taxes in 2020 and $750 in taxes for both 2016 and 2017 by claiming millions of dollars in dubious losses. Six years of his tax returns, which were being prepared this month for imminent release, show various kinds of questionable deductions that deserve heavy IRS scrutiny.

But it's not a question of whether his tax deductions were unlawful. Rather, it's a question of the law, which requires the IRS to audit the returns of every sitting president. That didn't happen for the first two years of Trump's presidency. Trump fought hard in court to block the Ways and Means Committee from accessing his tax records, but the Supreme Court ultimately ruled in the committee's favor.

When it comes to ensuring full accountability of any president or ex-president, Congress and the Justice Department should spare no effort investigating to ensure the IRS performs its job rigorously. No one should get a free pass.

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All in

My card-playing friends tell me (or rather insist) that poker is a game of skill, not luck. I have heard it said, "You've got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, [and] know when to run."[1] I don't doubt them; in fact, I'll double down and say that life too is a game of skill though I can't rule out luck.

While I don't often play poker, I have "made a life of reading people's faces [and] knowing what the cards were by the way they held their eyes."[2] I have yet to place a bet that I didn't win and/or lose, it's that simple and that complicated—"every hand's a winner and every hand's a loser."[3]

I have come to realize, to my dismay (if not astonishment), that I gamble with my life every day; should have played my last hand long ago and "there but for the grace of God go I." That sounds dramatic, I know, but it's not exaggerated. The truth is that in life, all of us are all in all the time—it's just that some are better than others at calling the bluffs on a fine line between fear (the dread in belief that someone or something is dangerous and will likely cause pain) and hope (the confident expectation of something better to come—some call that faith).

For me, there are perhaps no better illustrations of "going all in" than the push and pull of a recent love-interest and the headfirst dive into commercial fishing (on a very small scale) as a profession—somewhat redundant in the fishing nature on both fronts so-to-speak at the wholesale price or rather cost of my body, mind, heart, and soul. On the first front, "Our time here is limited and I give it all to you. Through the stars on a moonless night—hear the whispers it brings—I'm the guide by your side."[4]

As for the latter, at the battered age of 50 years old, very much worse for the wear, I walked away from a secure, long-time career of 20-plus years to pursue a childhood dream of wanting "to be a fisherman when I grow up." Riddled with debt and head just above water, I took my life's savings, ignored the debt, and bet it all on the ocean around us in arguably the most ill-advised financial gamble ever made and yet one of my proudest endeavors to date. "Not all that glitters is gold"; in fact, not much glitters more than my handcrafted lures and the fish coming aboard my boat in chase.

Being a fisherman today is a far cry from what I imagined or wanted to be as a child. For one thing, I aspired to be like some of my uncles who crafted their own one or two-man wooden canoes and sailed or paddled themselves to and from their fishing grounds. Most of their fishing was done swimming with the fishes, free-diving and spearing for catch. My version today is done trolling from the comforts of bigger fiberglass boats with high-powered engines completely reliant on fossil fuels/petroleum en route to and from my fishing grounds much, much further offshore than I could have ever imagined. Some days I find myself fearing for my life in turbulent, towering waves all around me and other days I am inspired with awe at the beauty and tranquility on an ocean of glass with no land in sight—always in search of my elusive white whale. I find peace in the solitude.

For a little over a year now I have found myself in rough waters (both literally and figuratively) with the mind and heart in constant battle over doing what I need to do (doing what's right, if you will) versus doing what I want to do—the line is blurry from the view through my salted eyes and motion of the ocean.

I suspect there are many more life lessons to be deemed from my fishing ventures (whether in the sea or on land) than my limited brain and hopeless heart can ascertain. More than likely my journey will present textbook cases of what not to do (and how we can learn from mistakes), but from somewhere in the darkness from many of life's storms I found some aces that I keep (in the words of people far more wise than I ever could be):

- "No storm, not even the one in your life, can last forever" (Unknown);
- "Every storm runs out of rain, just like every dark night turns into day" (Unknown);
- "When you fish for love, bait with your heart, not your brain" (Unknown);
- "We can only learn to love by loving" (Unknown);
- "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8)

Some people love to fish, others fish for love, but the luckiest among us simply fish with love…come what may.

[1] Kenny Rogers' song, *The Gambler*
[2] Kenny Rogers' song, *The Gambler*
[3] Kenny Rogers' song, *The Gambler*
[4] Ben Rayphand's *Time Limited*

MY GLASS CUP

By JIM RAYPHAND
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Jim Rayphand is a former executive director of the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc. and recently ventured into a startup fishing business.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

GCEA thanks its partners for another year of progress toward economic recovery

TOGETHER, WE CAN

By MATTHEW DELEON GUERRERO
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Matthew Deleon Guerrero is a Saipan-based economist serving as the chairman of the GCEA's Fiscal Economic Diversification Committee, an advisory council to the governor. Deleon Guerrero has served as an economics instructor at the Northern Marianas College and holds a master's degree in Economics. The GCEA's mission is to improve the quality of life in the Marianas for all residents.

As we mark the end of 2022, the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers looks back on a year of growing partnerships, greater community involvement, and a reinvigorated motivation to unlock the next chapter for the Marianas economy in this post-pandemic period for our world and our islands.

Looking back on the year, we have much to be thankful for. We saw tourism arrivals begin their growth toward pre-pandemic levels. We welcomed the resumption of direct flights to Japan made possible through partnerships with the CNMI and United Airlines. We saw the increasing surge of community involvement in partnering to beautify our islands through the adoption of public sites by private and community organizations through the GCEA's Public Private Partnership initiative.

The growth and impact of this program in 2022 have been truly remarkable. This past year saw greater participation in the PPP program that looks to align community organizations, businesses, and government agencies with the goal of upgrading and maintaining public facilities and sites throughout the Marianas. To date, the PPP has 103 outstanding organizations that have signed on to adopt 123 sites across Rota, Tinian, and Saipan. The council thanks each of the organizations, public sector agencies, and the mayors' offices for their valuable contribution to this effort. They invested their time, resources, and skills with the common goal of transforming and preserving these sites for future generations.

This year marked the start of the council's newest initiative, the Marianas School Pride campaign, which aims to increase ownership and pride in local school campuses that are pillars of our community. Increasing the quality of life and learning at the school level is the greatest investment we can make in our children.

MSP launched in 2022 following months of outreach and communication with Marianas educational institutions to develop a program specific to the students. MSP is a beautification and school community-building campaign that includes a multi-faceted approach to educating, informing, and engaging students through activities, beautification projects, and exciting contests. In addition, MSP aims to inspire students of the Marianas to take pride in where they live, learn, and play. Programs within the MSP initiative include the Advisor & Ambassador Program, which selected student Ambassadors from the schools who are tasked to lead and manage the submission of proposals for a beautification project; Campus Beautification provides an opportunity for students to show their pride and respect for their school campus by submitting a proposal for a school beautification project and earn points toward cash prizes; Christmas Decorating Contest to challenge students to compete for the best campus Christmas display; Campus Mural Contest aimed to see artwork developed by students to showcase what makes their school unique; and the Anti-Vandalism & Anti-Littering Campaigns to encourage the youth to create and produce video commercial materials that promote anti-vandalism and anti-littering in their campuses and villages, among others.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISERS

This collaboration between the private sector and our islands' educational institutions could not have been possible without the leadership and vision of the Marianas' education champions across schools and campuses, for which the council is immensely grateful.

This past year also allowed the council to combine the experience and expertise of the private sector and community toward the advancement of islands in the creation of GCEA's first 10-Year Plan. This plan is a living document, a foundation from which the priorities, ideas, and solutions to the Marianas' evolving challenges can be captured, analyzed, and discussed toward innovative and productive solutions for the improvement of the islands.

Since its creation in 2020, the council has set forward an ambitious mission of developing the Marianas to become a world-class destination and to improve the standards of living for the residents of these islands. In securing these goals, the 10-Year Plan seeks a comprehensive assessment of the potential solutions to present issues facing the islands, through utilizing the expertise and knowledge of the Marianas' private sector leaders to cover the areas of Tourism, Sustainability, Infrastructure and Workforce Development, Small Business Development and Retention, Investment, Government Services, and development on Tinian and Rota.

Through engagement with stakeholders and within the council, the first 10-Year Plan contains 37 recommendations for short-, medium-, and long-term actions that are possible in advancing the Marianas toward 2030. The plan, in full, can be found on GCEA's website, cnmieconomy.com.

As a part of this planning effort, GCEA participated in the 2022 Friends of Small Business Summit, through the planning committee on Small Business Development and Retention. Through this event, GCEA supported the wide-ranging survey of business leaders, in collaboration with the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, and the Small Business Development Center, that collected critical data on the needs and perceptions of small businesses finding that, among other things, the greatest challenge in both the short- and long-term perspectives is the cost of doing business in the Marianas. This summit and the data gathered on the issues facing small businesses in our economy will be critical in the many policy and community initiatives that are possible in the months and years ahead.

Overall, despite the challenges faced by the still-recovering economy in the Marianas, there has still been a tremendous amount of progress made to improve our community by all who call these islands home. We enter into the coming year stronger than we were at the start of 2022, and the work will continue in all of us doing our parts, in whatever way we can, to see recovery and success become a reality in 2023.

Happy New Year on behalf of the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers.

For more information about the GCEA's programs, visit the Council's website at cnmieconomy.com, engage with them on Facebook and Instagram (@cnmigov.economy), or contact them at gceacnmi@gmail.com.

Why I still 'like' Facebook, even though everyone else sort of hates it

By BOB BRODY
Chicago Tribune

Bob Brody is a consultant and essayist who lives in Italy. He is also the author of the memoir Playing Catch with Strangers: A Family Guy (Reluctantly) Comes of Age.

To some critics, Facebook is responsible for almost every evil ever invented. The social media platform, under the corporate parent Meta, violates our privacy, sells our personal information to the highest bidders, monopolizes the media, earns undeserved billions in profit all but hourly, single-handedly killed print journalism, manipulates our minds with sinister algorithms, spreads inflammatory political disinformation, cultivates an epidemic of manic selfie narcissism, forces us to adopt bogus personas and induces loneliness, envy, anxiety, depression and suicidal tendencies.

And that's just on a slow day.

I happen to feel largely otherwise. Speak out all you want against Facebook—and I know you will—but I've long seen it mainly as a force for good, especially around holidays such as Christmas. Thanks to Facebook, I accomplish a feat possible only 50 years ago mostly through phone calls and letters sent by mail: I stay current with almost all the people I know.

Now I can keep tabs on which former colleague got married or had a child, which high school classmate celebrated a birthday or wedding anniversary, and who took a new job or went on vacation. In the bargain, I get an opportunity to say congratulations. Likewise, I learn through Facebook about someone struggling through a divorce or cancer or grief over a loss and can then say, "I'm sorry," "Hang in there" and "We're with you."

The surprises are endless. Through Facebook, I came back into contact with a former girlfriend from 1967, much to my delight, only for her to remind me immediately of a detail I had somehow conveniently forgotten: that I had broken up with her, and not once but twice. This unfortunate discovery gave me a chance to apologize and ask her to forgive me.

Courtesy of Facebook, I now correspond once in a while with the boss who fired me—unjustifiably, I still feel—from my first job out of college. I'm also once again in touch with an ex-best friend who unaccountably dropped me decades ago.

OK, so Facebook's total user base worldwide—about 3 billion—dropped this year for the first time ever. Its stock value has plummeted, too. (I own no shares.) Some of its employees are getting laid off. And let's face it: Co-founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg testifying before a congressional committee makes for a profoundly unsympathetic spectacle.

And yes, my personal Facebook page sometimes gives me a headache. Someone may post a snarky comment about my family or eating habits or politics (quickly deleted). Certain couples appear never to tire of putting up photos of themselves smiling in front of the Trevi Fountain in Rome or some other illustrious landmark.

But to me, that's small potatoes. Facebook suits me personally. It enables us to witness the cycles of life from cradle to grave and everything in between. The whole parade of people you hold dearest daily marches before your eyes in word and picture. At its best, Facebook restores memories long forgotten, brings us together with those long lost to us, and gives us fresh chances to make amends with those estranged and redeem ourselves in a spirit of unity and reconciliation.

In 2015, I spent Christmas alone. My wife and daughter had recently moved to Italy, with plans for us all eventually to reunite. We stayed in touch mostly through Facebook video chats. But it was hard going. Suddenly I missed everyone, family and friends living and dead. So I posted the following message:

"Say what you want about Facebook, but today, at least for me, it's really doing what it's most meant to do. Create a sense of connection and community on a holiday all about connection and community. That means all the more to me this Christmas. My wife and daughter are on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, my mother and sister are in California, my remaining uncle and aunt are in Florida, and my cousins are scattered from Denver to North Carolina to D.C. So for me to join you all here right now, even if invisibly and silently, makes me more grateful than I can say."

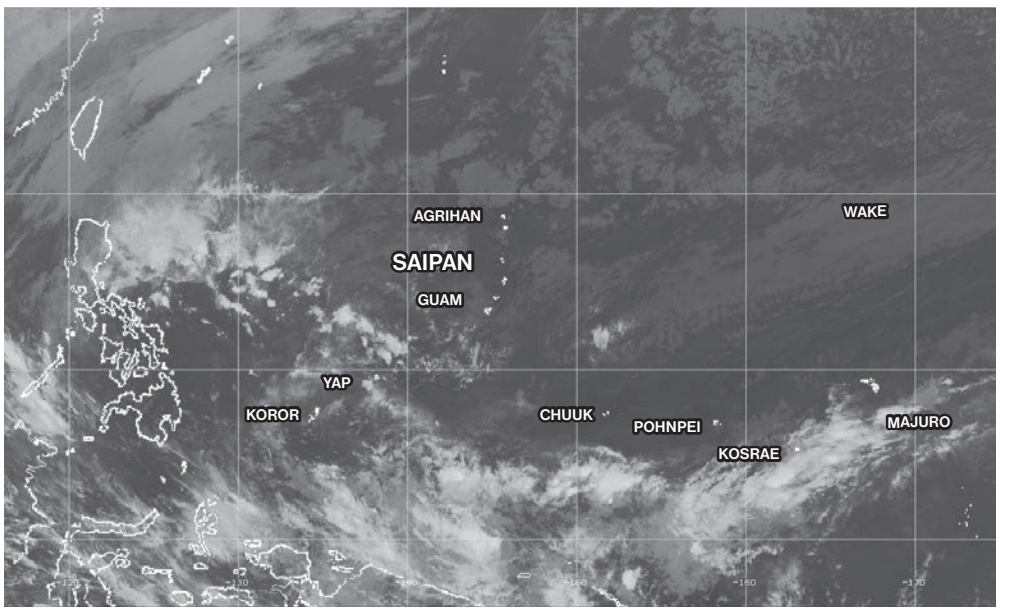
So yeah, go ahead and call me sappy. But as it turns out, Facebook is that rarest of rarities: a friend.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Isolated showers. Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny
85º / 75º	86º / 77º	86º / 77º	86º / 76º	86º / 76º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 9:23 AM, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2022

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Guam Doppler weather radar and satellite show isolated light showers moving through the Marianas Waters. The far northern edge of the shear line can just be seen at the far southern edge of the radar. The buoys reveal combined seas of 9 to 12 feet, composed of long period swell from the north and short period swell from east-northeast, which has the wind waves mixed in.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	84° / 77°
Palau	Isolated Thunderstorms	83° / 76°
Yap	Showers	85° / 77°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	87° / 81°
Pohnpei	Cloudy	88° / 79°
Kosrae	Showers	85° / 80°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	83° / 80°

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	76° / 64°
Beijing	Sunny	37° / 14°
Hong Kong	Sunny	67° / 53°
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	81° / 68°
London	Partly Cloudy	49° / 42°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	66° / 52°
Manila	Showers	87° / 76°
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	79° / 63°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	75° / 71°
New York	Partly Cloudy	49° / 36°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	49° / 37°
Paris	Rain	59° / 57°
Busan	Mostly Sunny	46° / 29°
Rome	Partly Cloudy	63° / 51°
Salem	Mostly Sunny	58° / 41°
San Francisco	Rain	52° / 51°
Seoul	Sunny	34° / 15°
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	51° / 35°
Washington, DC	Sunny	49° / 31°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:42 AM	5:56 PM
Saturday	6:42 AM	5:57 PM
Sunday	6:42 AM	5:57 PM
Monday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Tuesday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	12:19 PM	-	-
Saturday	-	12:46 AM	12:56 PM
Sunday	-	1:37 AM	1:34 PM
Monday	-	2:29 AM	2:14 PM
Tuesday	-	3:21 AM	2:56 PM

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
12:22 AM	High Tide	1.30
07:06 AM	Low Tide	0.12
2:03 PM	High Tide	1.75
8:52 PM	Low Tide	0.52

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 1, 2022

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	6:00AM	7:45AM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau
OZ624/701	3:40PM	10:35AM+1	3,6 via Incheon

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

OZ624	3:40PM	7:40PM	3, 6
TW308	4:30PM	8:20PM	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

BX621	3:10PM	6:30PM	3, 7

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:40PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ623	9:00AM	2:40PM	3, 6
TW307	10:00AM	3:30PM	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

BX622	8:00AM	1:10PM	3, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS

INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF AUGUST 18, 2022

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:00 A.M.	7:15 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
9:50 A.M.	10:05 A.M.	
4:00 P.M.	4:15 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:35 A.M.	7:50 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
10:25 A.M.	10:40 A.M.	
4:35 P.M.	4:50 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:10 A.M.	8:40 A.M.	
1:45 P.M.	2:15 P.M.	

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
9:00 A.M.	9:30 A.M.	
2:35 P.M.	3:05 P.M.	

SAIPAN TO GUAM

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:10 A.M.	12:00 P.M.	
5:15 P.M.	6:05 P.M.	

GUAM TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:30 P.M.	1:20 P.M.	
6:40 P.M.	7:30 P.M.	

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/ Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/ Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

HAPPY New Year MARIANAS

I would like to wish everyone a wonderful new year of good health, good fortune, growth, and blessings. As we begin 2023, let us reminisce on all the hard work, accomplishments, and events of the past year that have contributed to our journey as a Commonwealth and have brought us to where we are today. At the same time, let us look toward the future of the Commonwealth with hope and continue to work toward our shared dream of a prosperous Marianas for everyone that calls these islands home.

Once again, have a safe weekend and a Happy New Year, Marianas

– Governor Ralph DLG. Torres

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Happy Holidays

MARIANAS COFFEE

Marianas Strong Since 2004

Marianas Coffee wants to thank all its customers and businesses for supporting our locally roasted coffee products here on Saipan.

Hotels

Hyatt Regency
Aqua Resort Club
Pacific Islands Club
Saipan World Resort
Coral Ocean Resort
Grandvrio Resort Saipan

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Joeten Superstore
Joeten Stores
ABC Stores
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Himawari Saipan
LJ's Market

Restaurants & Bars

Godfather's Bar
Java Joes
Marianas Creations
Island Café
Mango Six Café

We kindly ask you to support and use these fine establishments for their excellent service and commitment to local brands.

Thank You,
David Hood
& TEAM

As 2022 comes to a close, we look back and reflect on the blessings the year has bestowed upon us.

Since 1985, along with the customers like you who continue to trust our products, our team and our service — it is our island community as a whole who stood by us that inspire us to keep our promise in serving you the best quality water and service in the Marianas.

And that is truly a blessing we could not be more grateful for.

At Saipan Ice & Water, we wholeheartedly THANK YOU for welcoming us into your homes and offices and allowing us to become a part of your family these past 37 years.

We look forward to serving you in 2023 and in all the years to come.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

2023

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Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality
Division of Coastal Resources Management
P.O. Box 501304, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-8300; Fax: (670) 664-8315
www.dcrm.gov.mp

Eli D. Cabrera
Administrator

Richard V.Salas
Director, DCRM

NOTICE OF CRM PUBLIC HEARING

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (DPW)
CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW KAGMAN TRANSFER STATION
SAIPAN INTEGRATED SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT
GABGAB ROAD, KAGMAN, SAIPAN
PUBLIC LAND - LOT NO. 004 G 07

The Division of Coastal Resources Management (DCRM) will be holding a public hearing for the following project:

CRM Major Siting Application No. CRM-MS2022-0002 (Amendment to SMS-00-X-129) – The Department of Public Works (DPW) is proposing to construct and operate the new Solid Waste Transfer Station along Gabgab Road in Kagman, Saipan. The new Kagman Transfer Station includes road improvements of the existing Gabgab Road that leads to the transfer station and is designed to function as a community convenience center for residents to dispose their household solid waste.

The public hearing for this project is scheduled on **Tuesday, January 17, 2023, at 5:00PM, at the DCRM Learning Center 3rd Floor, Suite 301, Gualo Rai Center, Chalan Pale Arnold Road in Lower Gualo Rai, Saipan.**

To maintain the health and safety of all, virtual public participation is highly encouraged via video conferencing through Zoom link: https://zoom.us/j (Meeting ID: 6706648315). Our Zoom meeting access code may change, please call the DCRM Permitting Office at (670) 664-8300 for connection assistance at least one-day prior to the public hearing date.

If you are unable to attend, written comments can be submitted to the DCRM Permitting Office, Suite 305, Gualo Rai Center, Middle Road, Gualo Rai, Saipan, or mailed to the Division of Coastal Resources Management, P.O. Box 501304, or sent by fax at 664-8315, or by email at ssablan@dcrm.gov.mp. The project file is open for review and comments during regular business hours from 7:30 A.M. – 4:30 P.M., Monday through Friday. All written and oral comments received by DCRM will be included as part of the permit application records and will be considered in any decisions concerning the proposed project. Please contact Ms. Sam Sablan at the DCRM Permitting Office at 664-8300/1 if you have any questions or would like to learn more about the new Kagman Transfer Station project.

/s/ Richard V. Salas
Director
Division of Coastal Resources Management

DIVISION OF COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

P. O. Box 501304, Saipan MP 96950 | Gualo Rai Center, Saipan
Tel. No. 664-8300 FAX NO. 664-8315
www.dcrm.gov.mp

NOTICE OF APPLICATION

As of December 30, 2022

THE FOLLOWING IS A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF COASTAL PERMIT APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE DCRM OFFICE:

APPLICANT	DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED	APPLICATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	TYPE	STATUS
1. U.S.A. Fanter Corporation, Ltd.	08/05/2022 CRM-MS2022-0003	Cement Batching Plant & Hollow Block Facility	Kannat Tabla, Saipan	Major Siting	Public Hearing 01/05/2023
2. Joaquina Agulto	11/14/2022 APC2022-0002	Construction of a Single Story, 2-Bedroom Residential House	Chalan Kanoa, Saipan	Wetlands & Mangroves	On Hold*
3. Department of Public Works (DPW)	11/17/2022 CRM-MS2022-0002	Kagman Transfer Station Facility	Kagman, Saipan	Major Siting	Certified Complete 12/27/2022
4. Hee Jung Lee dba Gaja	12/06/2022 APC2022-0004	Snorkeling	Grotto, Saipan	Lagoon & Reef	Approved* 12/06/2022
5. Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA)	12/14/2022 APC2022-0009	South Seaplane Ramp Amendment	Puerto Rico, Saipan	Ports & Industrial	Approved 12/28/2022
6. Office of Grants Management & State Clearinghouse (OGM)	12/19/2022 APC2022-0015	Pakpak Beach Park	San Antonio, Saipan	Shoreline	Under Review*
7. Mariana Sports Club, Inc. MSC	12/21/2022 APC2022-0014	SCUBA Diving Tour/Operation	All Designated Dive Sites, Saipan	Lagoon & Reef	Under Review*
8. Saipan Crewboats, Inc	12/27/2022 CRM-MD2022-0004	Dry-Dock C/B Carolinian Saipan	Lower Base,	Ports & Industrial	Under Review*
9. Let's Go Tour Company dba Sea-Touch	12/28/2022 APC2022-0016	Sandbar Tours Saipan	Garapan,	Lagoon & Reef	Under Review*
10.Sakura CNMI Corporation dba Sakura Marine Sports	12/29/2022 CRM-MD2022-0005	Temporary Beach Concession Saipan	Garapan,	Shoreline	Under Review*

NMIAC §15-10-210 of the CRM Rules and Regulations requires all permit applications to be published in a newspaper for general circulation within the CNMI within 15 days of receipt of application. The list reflects recently received permit applications and those with a recent change in status. New applications are marked with an asterisk (*).

The Public is invited to submit written comments regarding any of the above projects for which a permit decision has not been issued. All permit comments should identify the project by application number. Your comments should be mailed or hand-delivered to the DCRM Office. All persons who desire a public hearing regarding any project may do so by submitting a written request for a public hearing to the DCRM Office within fourteen (14) days for minor permits (APCs) and proposed amended major sitings. Public Hearings are required for all new major siting projects. All public hearing notices are published in a local newspaper of general circulation. Residents of Rota and Tinian may submit comments and hearing requests to their local DCRM Coordinator. Persons wishing to retain the right to appeal a DCRM Permit decision must file a notice of appeal with the DCRM office within thirty (30) days of the issuance of the DCRM permit decision as provided in Part 200 § 15-10-235 of the DCRM Regulations.

Business

Airline's cancellations continue to snowball

DALLAS (AP)—Families hoping to catch a Southwest Airlines flight after days of cancellations, missing luggage and missed family connections suffered through another wave of scrubbed flights, with another 2,500 pulled from arrival and departure boards Wednesday.

Exhausted travelers sought passage by other means using different airlines, rental cars, or trains—or they've simply given up.

According to the FlightAware tracking service, more than 91% of all canceled flights in the U.S. early Wednesday were from Southwest, which has been unable to recover from ferocious winter storms that raked large swaths of the country over the weekend.

The operational systems of Southwest have been uniquely effected, so much so that the federal government is now investigating what happened at the Dallas carrier, which has frustrated its own flight and ground crews as well.

This week, with cancellations from other major airlines ranging from none to 2%, Southwest has canceled nearly 10,000 flights as of Wednesday and warned of thousands more Thursday and Friday, according to FlightAware.

In a video that Southwest posted late Tuesday, CEO Robert Jordan said Southwest would operate a reduced schedule for several days but hoped to be "back on track before next week."

Jordan blamed the winter storm for snarling the airline's "highly complex" network. He said Southwest's tools for recovering from disruptions work "99% of the time, but clearly we need to double down" on upgrading systems to avoid a repeat of this week.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Bangladesh opens first metro service to ease Dhaka traffic

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP)—Bangladesh launched its first metro rail service, mostly funded by Japan, in the densely populated capital on Wednesday amid enthusiasm that the South Asian country's development bonanza would continue with both domestic and overseas funds. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the service accompanied by newly appointed Japanese Ambassador Kiminori Iwama and Ichiguchi Tomohide, the chief representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency, or JICA. "We have added another feather of pride to the crown of Bangladesh's people today. Another feather added to the crown of the development of Bangladesh," she said during the inauguration.

Tesla stock on pace for worst year ever

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Owning Tesla stock this year has been anything but a smooth ride for investors. Shares in the electric vehicle maker are down nearly 70% since the start of the year, on pace to finish in the bottom five biggest decliners among S&P 500 stocks. By comparison, the benchmark index is down about 20%. While Tesla has continued to grow its profits, signs of softening demand and heightened competition have investors increasingly worried. And then there's CEO Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter. Some of Musk's actions since taking over the social media company, including doing away with a content moderation structure created to address hate speech and other problems on the platform, have unnerved Twitter's advertisers and turned off some users.

Lack of info on China's COVID-19 surge stirs global concerns

BEIJING (AP)—Moves by the U.S., Japan and others to mandate COVID-19 tests for passengers arriving from China reflect global concern that new variants could emerge in its ongoing explosive outbreak—and the government may not inform the rest of the world quickly enough. There have been no reports of new variants to date. But given the country's track record, the worry is that China may not be sharing data on any signs of evolving strains that could spark fresh outbreaks elsewhere. The U.S., in announcing a negative test requirement Wednesday for passengers from China, cited both the surge in infections and what it said was a lack of information, including the genomic sequencing of the virus strains in the country.

Hong Kong scraps vaccine pass, COVID-19 tests for travelers

HONG KONG (AP)—Hong Kong will scrap some of its COVID-19 restrictions, including PCR tests for inbound travelers and vaccination requirements to enter certain venues, the city's leader said Wednesday. For most of the pandemic, Hong Kong has aligned itself with China's "zero-COVID" strategy, requiring stringent COVID-19 tests and isolation for close contacts of infected cases as well as for incoming travelers. But the mainland has relaxed measures in recent weeks, and Hong Kong is preparing for the January reopening of its border with China, which had previously imposed harsh restrictions and snap lockdowns to stamp out the virus.

China to resume issuing passports, visas as virus curbs ease

BEIJING (AP)—China says it will resume issuing passports for tourism in another big step away from anti-virus controls that isolated the country for almost three years, setting up a potential flood of Chinese going abroad for next month's Lunar New Year holiday.The announcement Tuesday adds to abrupt changes that are rolling back some of the world's strictest anti-virus controls as President Xi Jinping's government tries to reverse an economic slump. Rules that confined millions of people to their homes kept China's infection rate low but fueled public frustration and crushed economic growth.The latest decision could send free-spending Chinese tourists to revenue-starved destinations in Asia and Europe for Lunar New Year, which begins Jan. 22 and usually is the country's busiest travel season. But it also presents a danger they might spread COVID-19 as infections surge in China.

Nation

National Guard checks homes in Buffalo for blizzard victims

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The National Guard went door to door in parts of Buffalo on Wednesday to check on people who lost power during the area's deadliest winter storm in decades, and authorities faced the tragic possibility of finding more victims amid melting snow.

Already, more than three dozen deaths have been reported in western New York from the blizzard that raged Friday and Saturday across much of the country, with Buffalo in its crosshairs.

Carolyn Eubanks, who relied on an oxygen machine, collapsed after losing electricity at her Buffalo home during a time when emergency workers were unable to respond to calls, son Antwaine Parker told The Buffalo News.

"She's like, 'I can't go no further.' I'm begging her, 'Mom, just stand up.' She fell in my arms and never spoke another word," Parker told the newspaper.

Parker and his stepbrother knocked on nearby doors, seeking help. They found it when a stranger, David Purdy, answered and helped them carry the 63-year-old Eubanks inside and try in vain to revive her. Purdy and his fiancee sheltered her body until first responders arrived the next day.

"I done it as respectful as I could," Purdy told The Buffalo News.

Timothy Murphy, 27, died after snow covered a furnace and sent carbon monoxide into his Lockport home, the Niagara County sheriff's office said. Monique Alexander, 52, was found buried in snow after going out in the storm for unclear reasons, her daughter told The Buffalo News.

Anndel Taylor, 22, died in her car after it got stuck on her way home from work, her family told WSOC-TV.

The driving ban in New York's second-most-populous city was set to lift early Thursday, just after midnight, Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown said at a press conference Wednesday evening.

As the deep freeze eased into milder weather Wednesday and the number of lingering power outages dwindled, more than 600 National Guard members were sent to western New York, officials said.

"We are fearful that there are individuals who may have perished, living alone, or people who are not doing well," said Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz. The county encompasses Buffalo.

One pair of National Guard troops, clipboard in hand, knocked on the door of a home as people nearby tried to dig their way to businesses on a major avenue in Buffalo.

Twenty-five Guard teams were making such rounds Wednesday, spokesperson Eric Durr said by phone. He said troops had made some wellness checks previously but went out with a specific list of questions, including whether residents had food, water, electricity or any special health or medication concerns.

"The idea is to get a sense of: What are the needs out there?" said Durr, who noted that troops were offering food and water.

Buffalo Police Commissioner Joseph Gramaglia said officers from his and other agencies were searching for victims, sometimes using officers' personal snowmobiles, trucks and other equipment.

Migrants cling to hopes of reaching US

CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico (AP)—A familiar mix of disappointment, patience and determination spread among migrants on Mexico's northern border waiting to enter the United States as they faced the reality that pandemic-era asylum limits would remain for now.

Cautious optimism for an immediate opening had prevailed after a judge in November ordered in that a public health rule known as Title 42 end Dec. 21. But the U.S. Supreme Court dashed those hopes with a 5-4 decision Tuesday to hear arguments over the policy in February and to keep it in place until they rule.

Cristian Alexis Alvarez, 26, said returning to Honduras with his wife and their 5-year-old daughter wasn't an option after suffering through two kidnappings, hunger and sleeping in the streets on a four-month journey to Ciudad Juarez, across from El Paso, Texas.

Alvarez, who wants to join family in the United States and has already been expelled to Mexico under Title 42, said the Supreme Court's decision was "somewhat painful" but he was determined to wait for another opportunity.

"We cannot turn back and that's all there is to it — wait until we see what happens," he said after hearing the news.

Tuesday's ruling likely keeps Title 42 in place for at least several months but is not the final word. The court will review whether the 19 states challenging the policy have a right to intervene in the lawsuit.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT NO. 22-02
United States District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands

Case Administrator

Permanent, Full-Time Position - Location: SAIPAN, NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS (CNMI) Starting grade: CL-24 step 1 to CL 26 Step 25 ($44,553 to $67,769 which includes 12.45 % COLA) (Ultimate pay potential CL 26 ($67,769 - $88,137) by progressive performance and career salary progression)

Opening Date: December 19, 2022 • Applications received by January 3, 2023 will be given priority.

Position Overview:
This is a mid-to-full qualified operational court support position. The Case Administrator will review, process, and maintain records of court cases and handle the progression of cases to final disposition. Additional duties will be assigned as Relief Courtroom Deputy, and as Procurement Specialist. Other duties include cashiering, mail processing, customer service, scanning and copying documents, and organizing and shelving library materials. This position includes full federal employment benefits, with paid leave and holidays, health insurance, life insurance, and federal retirement benefits. Obtain a copy of the complete position description at https://www.nmid.uscourts.gov/employment

Minimum Qualifications and Preferred Qualifications:
High school graduate or equivalent, with at least two years of specialized work experience in applying recurring procedures and using specialized terminology that demonstrate the ability to apply a body of rules, regulations, directives, or laws, preferably in a court or related legal field. Education will not be substituted for required specialized work experience, but additional preference will be given for college graduation. Applicants should demonstrate sound ethics and judgment, be able to communicate effectively (orally and in writing) and have above-minimal skill in the use of office productivity software and online research skills. Additional preference will be given for skill in using automated case management systems.

Citizenship Requirement:
Applicants are required to be U.S. citizens or aliens who are authorized to work in the United States.

Notice to Applicants:
Excepted service appointments are "at will" and may be terminated by either the court or the employee at any time for any reason. Selectees may be subject to a background check or investigation and suitability determination; and may be subject to an updated background investigations every five years. Employees are subject to the Judicial Code of Conduct. Direct bank deposit of pay is required.

Application Procedure:
Each applicant is required to submit a Cover Letter, Resume, and an AO-78 application form. (Questions 18, 19, and 20 on page 5 of the AO-78 need not be answered.) AO-78 forms are at: https://www.uscourts.gov/forms/human-resources-forms/application-judicial-branch-federal-employment or may be picked up at the U.S. District Court. Position is open until filled; applications received by January 3, 2023 will be given priority.

We prefer you to email signed applications as a *single PDF file* to: HR@nmid.uscourts.gov

You may deliver signed applications to:
Clerk of Court
United States District Court
for the Northern Mariana Islands
3rd Floor, United States Courthouse, Gualo Rai, Saipan

The United States District Court is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Ralph DLG. Torres, Governor — *This ad is paid for by NMHC funds* — Arnold I. Palacios, Lt. Governor

Notice is hereby given that the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) is the agency authorized to allocate Low Incoming Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) in the CNMI. The United States 1986 Tax Reform Act created the federal low-income housing tax credit program under Section 42 of the Internal Revenue Code (Code) to assist with the development of low-income rental housing by providing qualified owners with credit to offset their federal tax obligations. The LIHTC is available to owners/developers of qualifying buildings and projects that meet certain low-income occupancy and rent restrictions.

Section 42 of the Code provides that the CNMI prepare a Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) to determine housing priorities and to give preference to projects serving the lowest income tenants and projects obligated to serve qualified tenants for the longest periods. The QAP must incorporate selection criteria, which include project location, housing need characteristics, sponsor characteristics, tenant populations with special needs, and public housing authority waiting lists. The QAP (as in the previous QAP) includes the capital needs assessment, limiting developer fees, and income averaging.

NMHC will conduct a public hearing to solicit comments from the public on 01/20/23, 9:00 a.m., at NMHC's Main Office in Garapan, Saipan. Copies of the draft **2023-2024** Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) are also available at NMHC's Main Office in Garapan, Saipan and on our website at www.nmhcgov.net.

Interested persons wishing to express their views on the QAP may do so either by attending the public hearing or by submitting comments to NMHC by 4:30 p.m. on 01/20/23. Further, individuals interested in attending the meeting and needing special accommodations are requested to contact NMHC in advance.

For more information on this program, please contact NMHC at 234-6866/7670/7689/9447.

/S/ JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
Tel: (670) 664-2371 | Fax: (670) 664-2408 | Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950

INVITATION TO BID
ITB23-GOV/OPD--42300023

ATTORNEY GENERAL OFFICE RENOVATION IN SUSUPE
SUBMISSION DATE: 10:00 AM ChST JANUARY 13, 2023

Governor Ralph DLG. Torres, through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is soliciting sealed bids for the *Attorney General Office Renovation* in Susupe, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). This project will be funded by the 702 Covenant funding under the U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs.

The project package will be available in digital format only on **December 16, 2022** at the Capital Improvement Program Office, Office of the Governor, Juan A. Sablan Administration Building in Capitol Hill, Saipan, during regular working hours.

A Pre-Bid Conference will be held at the Attorney General's Office located in Susupe, Saipan, CNMI at **10:00 AM ChST December 29, 2022.** Proposers may also request to participate virtually via Zoom Meetings five (5) days prior to the meeting scheduled.

Questions regarding this ITB may be submitted via email to Ms. Nerissa B. Karakaya at nerissa.benavente@gov.mp no later than **4:30 PM ChST January 4, 2023.** All Questions & Answers will be shared with all prospective bidders.

Bidders located outside of the CNMI must fill out and submit the Notice of Intent to Bid Form to the Director of Procurement Services no later than **10:00 AM ChST, January 13, 2023.**

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS, AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/s/ Ralph DLG. Torres
Governor, CNMI

/s/ Francisco C. Aguon, Acting Director
CNMI Procurement Services

Asia

Lack of info on China's COVID-19 surge stirs global concerns

BEIJING (AP)—Moves by the U.S., Japan and others to mandate COVID-19 tests for passengers arriving from China reflect global concern that new variants could emerge in its ongoing explosive outbreak — and the government may not inform the rest of the world quickly enough.

There have been no reports of new variants to date. But given the country's track record, the worry is that China may not be sharing data on any signs of evolving strains that could spark fresh outbreaks elsewhere.

The U.S., in announcing a negative test requirement Wednesday for passengers from China, cited both the surge in infections and what it said was a lack of information, including the genomic sequencing of the virus strains in the country.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida expressed a similar concern about a lack of information when he announced a testing requirement for passengers from China earlier this week.

More broadly, Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said recently that the WHO needs more information on the severity of the outbreak in China, particularly regarding hospital and ICU admissions, "in order to make a comprehensive risk assessment of the situation on the ground."

AP

An officer collects passports from residents for renewal and re-applications at a community police station in Beijing, Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2022.

That dubiousness, tinged with anger, on the part of the international community is a direct outcome of the ruling Communist Party's sudden and poorly prepared exiting of its hardline policies, said Miles Yu, director of the China Center at the Hudson Institute think tank.

"You can't conduct the lunacy of zero-covid lockdowns for such a long period of time, which was doomed to fail, and then suddenly unleash a multitude of the infected from a caged China to the world to risk further infections of potentially hundreds of millions more in other countries," Yu said in an email.

India, South Korea, Taiwan and Italy have also announced various testing requirements for passengers from China. German health authorities are monitoring the situation but have not taken similar preemptive steps.

"We have no indication that a more dangerous variant has developed in this outbreak in China that would be grounds to declare a virus variant area, which would bring corresponding travel restrictions," Health Ministry spokesperson Sebastian Guelde said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said last week that China has always shared its information responsibly with the WHO and the international community.

"We stand ready to work with the international community in solidarity to tackle the COVID challenge more effectively, better protect people's lives and health and jointly restore steady economic growth and build a global community of health for all," she said.

However, in a hardening of China's rhetoric, Mao's colleague Wang Wenbin on Wednesday lashed out at critical foreign reporting on China's new approach.

"This type of rhetoric is driven by bias, intended to smear China and politically motivated," Wang said at a daily ministry briefing.

China rolled back many of its tough pandemic restrictions earlier this month, allowing the virus to spread in a country that had seen relatively few infections since an initial devastating outbreak in the city of Wuhan in early 2020.

US to sell Taiwan anti-tank system amid rising China threat

WASHINGTON (AP)—The U.S. State Department has approved the sale of an anti-tank mine-laying system to Taiwan amid the rising military threat from China.

The department on Wednesday said the Volcano system and all related equipment would cost an estimated $180 million.

It's capable of scattering anti-tank and anti-personnel mines from either a ground vehicle or helicopter, the type of weapon some experts believe Taiwan needs more of to dissuade or repel a potential Chinese invasion.

To advertise that threat, China's military sent 71 planes and seven ships toward Taiwan in a 24-hour display of force directed at the self-ruled island it claims is its own territory, Taiwan's Defense Ministry said Monday.

China's military harassment of Taiwan has intensified in recent years, along with rhetoric from top leaders that the island has no choice but to accept eventual Chinese rule.

That has seen the ruling Communist Party's increasingly powerful military wing, the People's Liberation Army, send planes or ships toward the island on a near-daily basis.

Between 6 a.m. Sunday and 6 a.m. Monday, 47 of the Chinese planes crossed the median of the Taiwan Strait, an unofficial boundary once tacitly accepted by both sides, according to the Defense Ministry.

That came after China expressed anger at Taiwan-related provisions in a U.S. annual defense spending bill in what has come to be a standard Chinese practice.

China conducted large-scale live-fire military exercises in August in response to U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan. Beijing views visits from foreign governments to the island as de facto recognition of Taiwan as independent and a challenge to China's claim of sovereignty.

While Washington has only unofficial ties with Taiwan in deference to Beijing, those include robust defense exchanges and military sales.

In its announcement, the State Department said the Volcano sale "serves U.S. national, economic, and security interests by supporting the recipient's continuing efforts to modernize its armed forces and to maintain a credible defensive capability."

It said Taiwan would have "no difficulty absorbing this equipment into its armed forces," and that the sale would "not alter the basic military balance in the region."

Analysts differ over what Taiwan's defense priorities should be, with some calling for big-ticket items such as advanced fighter jets.

Others argue for a more flexible force, heavily armed with land-based missile systems to target enemy ships, planes and landing craft. China's overwhelming numerical advantage in personnel and equipment give Taiwan little choice but to opt for that more "asymmetric" approach, they say.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Nepal's new PM takes oath at the helm of fragile coalition

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP)—Nepal's newly appointed prime minister took his oath Monday, leading a fragile coalition that includes his former opponent and other smaller political parties.

Maoist Communist party leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal was sworn in by President Bidhya Devi Bhandari at the President House in Kathmandu at a ceremony attended by top officials, diplomats and politicians.

Dahal has appointed three deputies and four other ministers in the Cabinet that is expected to be expanded in the next few days to accommodate more members from the seven parties in the new coalition government.

Dahal has the support of more than half the members of the newly elected 275-member House of Representatives, the lower house of Parliament where he will have to prove his majority.

It is Dahal's third time in power since his Maoist group quit an armed revolt and joined mainstream politics in 2006.

Besides having to hold together political parties with different beliefs, Dahal has the grapple with reviving the country's economy that was hit hard by the pandemic and balance relations with its giant neighbors — China and India — each vying for influence in Nepal.

Seven parties are supporting Dahal, including his friend-turned-foe Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), led by Khadga Prasad Oli.

Dahal and Oli had partnered in the last parliamentary election in 2017, but midway through the five-year term they began to squabble on who would continue as the prime minister. It was initially agreed that they would share the term but Oli apparently refused, angering Dahal.

Dahal abandoned the partnership and aligned with Sher Bahadur Deuba and his Nepali Congress party to be part of a new coalition government that was led by Deuba.

Fire at hotel casino on Cambodia border kills at least 10

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP)—A fire burning through a Cambodian hotel casino has killed at least 10 people and injured 30 others, police said Thursday, and neighboring Thailand sent firetrucks to help fight the blaze in a bustling border region.

Videos posted on social media showed people apparently jumping from windows after they were trapped by the fire at the Grand Diamond City Casino and Hotel in the border town of Poipet. Thailand's public broadcaster reported dozens of Thais were trapped inside.

The blaze that started around midnight Wednesday was still burning Thursday morning.

At least 10 people had been killed and another 30 injured, some critically, said Maj. Gen. Sithi Loh, police chief in Banteay Meanchey province.

He said 360 emergency personnel and 11 firetrucks were sent to the scene and rescue teams were looking for victims.

Sithi Loh said the cause of the blaze was not yet known. The casino employed about 400 workers.

Thai PBS reported that 50 Thais, both staff and customers, were trapped inside the casino complex. It reported that Cambodian authorities requested help to deal with the fire from Thailand, which sent five firetrucks and 10 rescue vans.

World

Ukraine braces for a dark winter

AP

Smoke billows after Russian attacks in the outskirts of Bakhmut, Ukraine, Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2022.

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP)—Vildana Mutevelić huddled in her apartment with her two young children and elderly cousins. They had no heat, electricity or running water as artillery shells tore the roof off their building and almost took their lives.

To survive, she improvised.

Mutevelić made a lamp out of used engine oil, water and a shoelace for a wick. She cooked on a fire fueled by books, furniture, shoes or clothes. A plastic spoon, she discovered, when lit, worked well as a temporary flashlight if she ventured outside. Plastic sheets covered the blown-out windows, a flimsy buffer against the bitter cold. Her news of the world came from a neighbor who powered a radio with a car battery.

"The electricity failed right away," Mutevelić, 70, said through a translator. "And everything we had in our freezers, it melted. Those were our stocks, basically. That's all."

For Mutevelić, these are memories from three decades ago, when Bosnian Serbs besieged Sarajevo, causing thousands of civilian casualties. But it's all happening again in Ukraine. Russia's armed forces have aimed their firepower at Ukraine's energy infrastructure as winter weather sets in.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has accused Russia of "energy terrorism," said earlier this week that about 9 million people were without electricity. The country's prosecutor general, Andriy Kostin, told The Associated Press that Russia's deliberate targeting of Ukraine's essential utilities is another act of genocide, the most heinous of war crimes.

"We are convinced that the crimes (Russia) is committing in Ukraine bear all the hallmarks of genocide," Kostin said in a statement. "The aggressor state is 'weaponizing winter,' depriving Ukrainians of the basics — electricity, water and heating."

This story is part of an AP/FRONTLINE investigation that includes the War Crimes Watch Ukraine interactive experience and the documentary " Putin's Attack on Ukraine: Documenting War Crimes " on PBS.

To make civilians suffer and die as a way to force their government to yield isn't a new wartime strategy. But it's prone to failure. Families, neighbors and entire communities band together, brainstorm and resist. As Sarajevo did. And as Britain did when the island nation refused to buckle under Nazi Germany's withering assaults 80 years ago.

"The ability of a modern population to survive under duress and under aggression because of the mere willingness to continue to exist is sometimes underestimated," said Bruno Tertrais, adviser for geopolitics at the Institut Montaigne, a Paris-based think tank.

Ukrainians are displaying the same resolve and ingenuity. Larysa Shevtsova's apartment in Ukraine's southern city of Kherson lost its electricity and water. But gas still flowed into a stove in the cramped kitchen. With two fire-resistant bricks and advice from a family friend, she and her husband were able to keep the temperature bearable in their home without being confined to the kitchen.

They'd set a brick directly on one of the stove's four burners, the three others covered by large pots and a kettle. When the rectangular block was hot enough, it was carried carefully into the living room and set on top of a Soviet-era space heater that no longer worked. Shevtsova, her husband and two sons, one of them 3 years old, huddled around the brick for warmth that would last for about 30 minutes.

"We use this method to heat the room," Shevtsova said. "Before that we just froze."

The Associated Press and the PBS series "Frontline," drawing from a variety of sources, have independently documented more than 40 attacks by Russia on Ukraine's electrical power, heat, water and telecommunications facilities since February.

The extent of Russia's path of destruction is not limited to one region of Ukraine. From the east to west, Russia has unleashed an onslaught of drone and missile attacks meant to inflict maximum damage to Ukraine's energy infrastructure with a drastic uptick in strikes since September, according to AP's analysis of the data.

Netanyahu government: West Bank settlements top priority

JERUSALEM (AP)—Benjamin Netanyahu's incoming hard-line Israeli government put West Bank settlement expansion at the top of its priority list on Wednesday, vowing to legalize dozens of illegally built outposts and annex the occupied territory as part of its coalition deal with ultranationalist allies.

The coalition agreements, released a day before the government is to be sworn into office, also included language endorsing discrimination against LGBTQ people on religious grounds, contentious judicial reforms, as well as generous stipends for ultra-Orthodox men who prefer to study instead of work.

The package laid the groundwork for what is expected to be a stormy beginning for the country's most religious and right-wing government in history, potentially putting it at odds with large parts of the Israeli public, rankling Israel's closest allies and escalating tensions with the Palestinians.

"What worries me the most is that these agreements change the democratic structure of what we know of as the state of Israel," said Tomer Naor, chief legal officer of the Movement for Quality Government in Israel, a watchdog group. "One day we'll all wake up and Netanyahu is not going to be prime minister, but some of these changes will be irreversible."

The guidelines were led by a commitment to "advance and develop settlement in all parts of the land of Israel," including "Judea and Samaria," the biblical names for the West Bank.

Israel captured the West Bank in 1967 along with the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem — territory the Palestinians seek for a future state. Israel has constructed dozens of Jewish settlements home to around 500,000 Israelis who live alongside around 2.5 million Palestinians.

Most of the international community considers Israel's West Bank settlements illegal and an obstacle to peace with the Palestinians. The United States already has warned the incoming government against taking steps that could further undermine hopes for an independent Palestinian state.

In response to a request for comment, the Palestinian leadership emphasized that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be resolved only through the establishment of a Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital.

Without a negotiated two-state solution, "there will be no peace, security or stability in the region," said Nabil Abu Rdeneh, a spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

There was no immediate U.S. comment.

Netanyahu, who served 12 years as prime minister, is returning to power after he was ousted from office last year. His new government is made up of ultra-Orthodox parties, a far-right ultranationalist religious faction affiliated with the West Bank settler movement and his Likud party.

In the coalition agreement between Likud and its ally, the Religious Zionism party, Netanyahu pledged to legalize wildcat settlement outposts considered illegal even by the Israeli government. He also promises to annex the West Bank "while choosing the timing and considering the national and international interests of the state of Israel."

Such a move would alienate much of the world, and give new fuel to critics who compare Israeli policies in the West Bank to apartheid South Africa.

The deal also grants favors to Itamar Ben-Gvir, a far-right politician who will be in charge of the national police force as the newly created national security minister.

It includes a commitment to expand and vastly increase government funding for the Israeli settlements in the divided West Bank city of Hebron, where a tiny ultranationalist Jewish community lives in heavily fortified neighborhoods amid tens of thousands of Palestinians. Ben-Gvir lives in a nearby settlement.

The agreement also includes a clause pledging to change the country's anti-discrimination laws to allow businesses to refuse service to people "because of a religious belief."

The legislation drew outrage earlier this week when members of Ben-Gvir's party said the law could be used to deny services to LGBTQ people. Netanyahu has said he will not let the law pass, but nonetheless left the clause in the coalition agreement.

Among its other changes is placing Bezalel Smotrich, a settler leader who heads Religious Zionism party, in a newly created ministerial post overseeing West Bank settlement policy.

Italy demands Iran halt its crackdown on protesters

ROME (AP)—Italy's foreign minister on Wednesday summoned Iran's new ambassador to Rome to express his country's concerns over the Iranian authorities' crackdown on anti-government protests that have been underway for over three months.

Conveying Italy's "indignation and worry" over the crackdown, Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said he hopes that Iran will respond "positively to Italy's request."

The deadly crackdown, he said, "has nothing to do with protecting national security of the country."

Tajani also said Italy was asking that Tehran suspend the death penalty in connection with the protests and immediately halt the executions of prisoners held over the demonstrations.

Tajani added that the Iranian ambassador, Mohammad Reza Saburi, who took up his post on Wednesday, agreed to convey Italy's requests.

Iran has been shaken by mass protests since mid-September over the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurdish woman who died after being detained by the country's morality police for allegedly violating Iran's strict dress code for women.

The protests rapidly escalated into calls for the overthrow of Iran's theocracy, established after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, marking one of the biggest challenges to the Iranian clerical rule in over four decades.

At least 507 protesters have been killed and more than 18,500 people have been arrested, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group that has closely monitored the unrest. Iranian authorities have not released figures for those killed or arrested.

"We only ask that women aren't massacred because they take off their veil," Tajani said. "We ask that young women are not condemned to death because they take part in protests, that children are not killed at roadblocks."

Seeking to stamp out the demonstrations and ramp up pressure on critics, Iran has sentenced several protesters to death and carried out two executions despite widespread international criticism.

The European Union foreign ministers, including Tajani, imposed new sanctions earlier this month over the crackdown, targeting senior clerics, officials and state media employees with travel bans and freezing the assets of 20 individuals.

Science & Technology

Making pig livers humanlike in quest to ease organ shortage

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP)—The ghostly form floating in a large jar had been the robust reddish-brown of a healthy organ just hours before. Now it's semitranslucent, white tubes like branches on a tree showing through.

This is a pig liver that's gradually being transformed to look and act like a human one, part of scientists' long quest to ease the nation's transplant shortage by bioengineering replacement organs.

The first step for workers in this suburban Minneapolis lab is to shampoo away the pig cells that made the organ do its work, its color gradually fading as the cells dissolve and are flushed out. What's left is a rubbery scaffolding, a honeycomb structure of the liver, its blood vessels now empty.

Next human liver cells—taken from donated organs unable to be transplanted—will be oozed back inside that shell. Those living cells move into the scaffolding's nooks and crannies to restart the organ's functions.

"We essentially regrow the organ," said Jeff Ross, CEO of Miromatrix. "Our bodies won't see it as a pig organ anymore."

That's a bold claim. Sometime in 2023, Miromatrix plans first-of-its-kind human testing of a bioengineered organ to start trying to prove it.

If the Food and Drug Administration agrees, the initial experiment will be outside a patient's body. Researchers would place a pig-turned-humanlike liver next to a hospital bed to temporarily filter the blood of someone whose own liver suddenly failed. And if that novel "liver assist" works, it would be a critical step toward eventually attempting a bioengineered organ transplant—probably a kidney.

AP

A pig kidney that has been "decelled" is held by a technician in a Micromatrix laboratory on Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2022, in Eden Prairie, Minn.

"It all sounds science fiction-ey but it's got to start somewhere," said Dr. Sander Florman, a transplant chief at New York's Mount Sinai Hospital, one of several hospitals already planning to participate in the liver-assist study. "This is probably more of the near future than xenotransplantation," or directly implanting animal organs into people.

More than 105,000 people are on the U.S. waiting list for an organ transplant. Thousands will die before it's their turn. Thousands more never even get put on the list, considered too much of a long shot.

"The number of organs we have available are never going to be able to meet the demand," said Dr. Amit Tevar, a transplant surgeon at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. "This is our frustration."

May the new year bring you peace and prosperity!
As we approach 2023, we do so with hope in our hearts for the people of our great Commonwealth.
Let us start the new year with the spirit of joy and unity for our community and for our home.
Felis Anu Nuebu!
2023
From Governor-elect Arnold I. Palacios
and Lt. Governor-elect David M. Apatang

US will require COVID tests for all travelers from China

By CARLA K. JOHNSON
AP MEDICAL WRITER

The U.S. announced new COVID-19 testing requirements Wednesday for all travelers from China, joining other nations imposing restrictions because of a surge of infections.

The increase in cases across China follows the rollback of the nation's strict anti-virus controls. China's "zero COVID" policies had kept the country's infection rate low but fueled public frustration and crushed economic growth.

The new U.S. requirements, which start Jan. 5, apply to travelers regardless of their nationality and vaccination status.

In a statement explaining the testing, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cited the surge in infections and what it said was a lack of adequate and transparent information from China, including genomic sequencing on the viral strains circulating in the country.

"These data are critical to monitor the case surge effectively and decrease the chance for entry of a novel variant of concern," the CDC said.

Some scientists are worried the COVID-19 surge in China could unleash a new coronavirus variant on the world that may or may not be similar to the ones circulating now. That's because every infection is another chance for the virus to mutate.

"What we want to avoid is having a variant enter into the U.S. and spread like we saw with delta or omicron," said Matthew Binnicker, director of clinical virology at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

But the CDC's action may be less about stopping a new variant from crossing U.S. borders and more about increasing pressure on China to share more information, said Dr. David Dowdy, an infectious disease epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, adding he hopes the restrictions "aren't kept in place longer than they need to be."

"I don't think it's going to have a major impact in slowing the spread of COVID-19," Dowdy said. "We have a whole lot of transmission of COVID-19 here within our borders already."

Dr. Stuart Campbell Ray, an infectious disease expert at Johns Hopkins University, agreed China isn't sharing enough genomic sequencing information. But he also said the U.S. has become a little complacent about sequencing and needs to redouble its own efforts. The CDC also announced the expansion of an early warning program that tests volunteers at select airports for new and rare variants of the coronavirus. That program will expand to airports in Seattle and Los Angeles.

Off The Wall

Northern California statue of meat-packing magnate beheaded

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—The statue of a 19th-century Northern California rancher and meat-packing magnate was decapitated earlier this week, leaving investigators in the state's capital city scratching their heads to find a motive behind the vandalism.

Tipsters could receive a $1,000 reward for information about what befell the nearly century-old granite statue of Charles Swanston in Sacramento's William Land Park on Monday. The severed head was found on the ground nearby.

Swanston traveled west from Ohio as part of the California Gold Rush and quickly realized he'd make more money as a butcher, according to Sacramento City Historian Marcia Eymann.

Police are investigating whether the vandal—or vandals—had a beef with the Swanstons or if it was a random act.

"I have no idea why anyone, unless they're vegetarians and didn't like meat-packers" would do this to the statue, Eymann said Wednesday. "I find this very bizarre."

The statue is the work of the late sculptor Ralph Stackpole, a famous San Francisco artist during the Great Depression era.

An early Sacramento pioneer and settler, Swanston then became a rancher and started a meat-packing business that made him rich. His son in the 1920s commissioned the statue, which is part of a fountain, and donated it to the city after Swanston's death in 1911 at 101 years old, The Sacramento Bee reported.

AP

The historic statue of Charles Swanston, its head recently decapitated, stands in William Land Park on Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2022, in Sacramento, Calif.

OFFBEAT BRIEFS

Arizona driver cited for carpooling with inflatable Grinch

PHOENIX (AP)—The Grinch came early for an Arizona driver who tried to pass off an inflatable figure of the Dr. Seuss character as a passenger. The Arizona Department of Public Safety says a state trooper last week noticed a car in a high-occupancy vehicle lane on Interstate 10 in Phoenix with a "Seusspicious-looking" green passenger. While the gag may have caused the officer's heart to grow, it did not stop the driver from getting cited for being in the HOV lane during a restricted time.

Alabama women convicted for feeding, trapping stray cats

WETUMPKA, Ala. (AP)—Two Alabama women have been convicted of misdemeanor crimes because of their efforts to feed and trap stray cats. Local news outlets report that Wetumpka Municipal Judge Jeff Courtney on Tuesday found Beverly Roberts, 85, guilty of criminal trespassing and disorderly conduct. Mary Alston, 61, was found guilty of criminal trespassing and interfering with governmental operations. Courtney sentenced both women to 2 years of unsupervised probation and 10 days in jail. The jail sentence was suspended, meaning the women will serve no time. Each woman was also fined $100 and ordered to pay court costs.

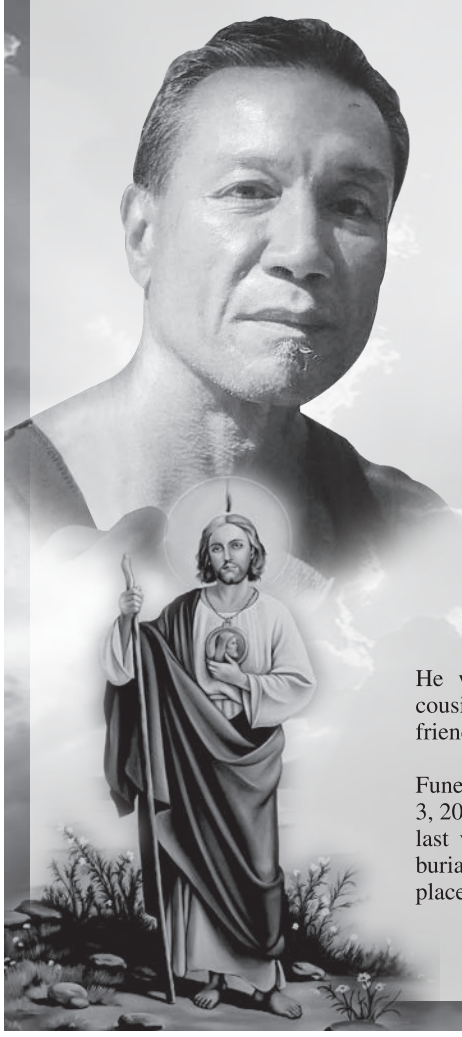
Roswell to host another festival for UFO-philes next spring

ROSWELL, N.M. (AP)—Roswell, known for its association with extraterrestrial matters, will have two big UFO-themed events next year. The Roswell Daily Record reported Tuesday that the city has negotiated to host the second annual UFOXPO in the spring. The three-day event was previously held in Florida. The extraterrestrial extravaganza includes a film festival, cosplay, panels on UFOs and live music. It will be held March 10-12. This is on top of the city's UFO Festival every summer. Roswell officials hope the UFOXPO can be another flagship event that draws visitors during spring break season. Ideally, the festivals will complement each other.

IN CELEBRATION OF HIS NEW LIFE

†Juan Masga Delos Santos

Lovingly Known as "Ku" or "John"
November 14, 1963 – November 25, 2022



In his new life, he now joins his:
Mother: †Maria Masga Delos Santos
Brother: †Martin Juan Mafnas
Niece: †Vicky Jean Castro

His spirit, laughter, and memories will forever live in the hearts of his:
Father: Daniel Pangelinan Delos Santos
Minnie Martin Delos Santos

Children: Cherise C. Perez
John Daniel C. Delos Santos
Jovilyn C. Delos Santos

Sisters and Brothers:
Paula M. Delos Santos
Antonia M. Delos Santos
Priscilla M. Delos Santos
Anthony M. Delos Santos
Jerry M. Delos Santos
Daniel Jr. M. Delos Santos

He will be missed by numerous uncles, aunties, cousins, nieces, nephews, godchildren, relatives, and friends.

Funeral and memorial services will be held on January 3, 2023, at San Jose Church, Oleai. Responso and the last viewing will begin at 8 am. Mass of Christian burial will be celebrated at 10 am and Burial will take place at Chalan Kanoa Cemetery.

Un Dangkulu na Si Yu'us Ma'ase
The Family

In God's Loving Care

†VALENTINO RONALD ATALIG TAISACAN

BETTER KNOWN AS: "RON"

Born to Life on February 15, 1961
Called to his Eternal Life by Our Dear Lord on December 12, 2022

In his New Life, he now joins his:
Parents: †Leon Inos Taisacan
†Lydia Atalig Taisacan
Grandparents: †Jose Camacho Atalig and
†Maria Barcinas Atalig,
†Juan Satur Taisacan and
†Ana Inos Taisacan

His Spirit and Memories will Live Forever in the Hearts of His:
Brothers/Sisters & Family:
Caroline T. and †Jose M. Cabrera: Lydine T. & Jachary A. Arriola-Jaydin, Jaely, Arabella, & Arames Joe
Jose T. & Cheryl B. Cabrera-Nicolas, Caleb, Jacob, Aries
Lydisha T. & James Antes-Jazzeke
Lilian T. & Kenneth P. Indalecio: Kenneth Leon
†Wilfred Atalig Taisacan
†Dennis A. & Geraldine C. Taisacan: Gydia T & Joab Camacho- Danny, Dylon, Ava
Deon Castrence Taisacan
John Joseph Castrence Taisacan
Ana Maria Castrence Taisacan
Vianney B. & Angie A. Hocog: Avery Casilda A. & Noel M. Calvo
Vianney B. & Sheila Marie Hocog
Vinney An-Ik Atalig-Hocog & Jatanna Sherise
Christian Isaiah A. & Brandalyn Hocog)

He is additionally survived by numerous aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews & relatives.

On Thursday, January 5, 2023, family and friends are invited for public viewing at the Borja Funeral Home from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

The remains of our beloved †Ron will depart from Saipan to Rota on Friday, January 6, 2023 at 2:00 p.m., expected arrival on Rota will be around 3: 00 p.m.

On Saturday, January 7, 2023, our beloved †Ron will be escorted from the Rota Health Center to the San Francisco De Borja Church for the Holy Rosary and Viewing. Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10:00 a.m. followed by Interment Service at the San Jose Cemetery.

Thank you for Your Thoughts and Prayers
The Family

Life & Style

The Year of the Slap: Pop culture moments in 2022

By JOCELYN NOVECK
AP NATIONAL WRITER

Taylor Swift was up. Elon Musk was in, out, in and maybe out again. Tom Cruise was back. BTS stepped aside, and so did Serena Williams, and Tom Brady too—oops, scratch that.

But the slap? The slap was everywhere.

Ok, so maybe it wasn't on the level of a moon landing, or selection of a pope. But henceforth all you need say is "the slap" and people will know what you mean—that moment Will Smith smacked Chris Rock at the Oscars and a global audience said, "Wait, did that happen?" Even in the room itself—maybe especially in the room itself—there was a sense everyone had imagined it, which helps explain why things went on as normal, for a bit.

The pandemic was over, phew! Well, of course it wasn't. But live entertainment pushed forward in 2022, with mask mandates dropping and people rushing to buy things like, oh, Taylor Swift tickets!

We'll take any segue to mention Swift, who already had a big year in 2021, but just got bigger—heck, she broke Billboard records and then she broke Ticketmaster. (No word if she got her scarf back).

It was a year of celebrity #MeToo cases like Harvey Weinstein (again), R. Kelly (again), Kevin Spacey, Paul Haggis, Danny Masterson. And the Johnny Depp-Amber Heard defamation trial, its every excruciating turn captured on TV.

On the big screen, there were big comebacks. Mourning its dearly missed star, Chadwick Boseman, "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" was a box office triumph. James Cameron's "Avatar" made a splashy December return.

Then there was Cruise, turning 60 in '22 just like the Rolling Stones, swooping into Cannes with his most successful movie and showing, like those still-touring rockers, that when they tell you "The end is inevitable," as they do in "Top Gun: Maverick," you can always reply: "Maybe so, sir, but not today."

Will audiences one day find Cruise—or the Stones, for that matter—too wrinkled and past the sell-by date? Maybe so, but not this year.

Our annual, totally selective journey through a year in pop culture:

JANUARY

It's GOLDEN GLOBES time. But is a Globes with no telecast, boozy celebs or red carpet a Globes at all? The embattled Hollywood Foreign Press Association, reeling from stunning failures over diversity, holds a private event and plans a comeback next year. Hey, remember the original wardrobe malfunction? Well, JANET JACKSON says she and JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE have moved on, and so should we. The New York Times buys Wordle, and we're all thinking in five-letter words (though W-O-R-D-L-E is six, just saying.) Meanwhile, it's a month of loss, heading off a year of loss: pioneering Black actor, director and activist SIDNEY POITIER dies at 94.

FEBRUARY

What would a year in pop culture be without BRITNEY? Just months after her liberation from her restrictive conservatorship, Spears is reported to have signed a mammoth book deal, but at year's end we're still waiting for news. RIHANNA is pregnant! TOM BRADY retires! (Stay tuned, on that one.) TAYLOR watch: JAKE GYLLENHAAL speaks out, saying he really has nothing to do with that song.

MARCH

Quick, who wins Oscars this month? Well, "CODA" does, a feel-good drama with a largely deaf cast, and TROY KOTSUR becomes the first deaf actor to win an acting Oscar. Alas, all anyone can talk about is—you know. SMITH, who wins the best actor award not long after slapping Rock over a joke about his wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, won't truly address the issue until the end of the year, so keep reading. KARDASHIAN watch: Kim K is declared legally single again in her ongoing divorce with YE, the rapper formerly known as KANYE WEST. And BRADY, retired for 40 days, says, "Never mind!"

APRIL

It's GRAMMY time, and JON BATISTE wins big, taking five statuettes. The musician's huge year will later include performing at the first state dinner of the Biden administration, for French President Emmanuel Macron. The next day Macron will meet with MUSK (thanks for the segue, Monsieur le President) who begins his acquisition of TWITTER this month, leading to untold—and still unfolding—changes at the social media giant.

MAY

So imagine you're sipping cocktails at the MET GALA and a musician comes sauntering through, playing the melodica—of course it's BATISTE, because the Met Gala's that kind of crazy party. The biggest splash of the night, though, is KARDASHIAN, on the arm of boyfriend PETE DAVIDSON, wearing the same sequined, skin tight gown MARILYN MONROE wore to sing "Happy Birthday" to JFK in 1962. In movies, "Top Gun: Maverick" opens, the highest-grossing domestic debut in CRUISE'S career, and his first to surpass $100 million on opening weekend. HARRY STYLES fans rejoice! His album, "Harry's House," is here.

JUNE

Stunning news for the global fanbase of BTS as the K-pop supergroup announces it's taking a break to focus on members' solo projects. On the legal front, a Virginia jury hands DEPP a victory in his very messy libel case over allegations of domestic abuse, finding that former wife HEARD defamed him in a 2018 op-ed. On a happier note, Britney gets married….

JULY

Only one wedding, Britney? BENNIFER has two! Maybe what happens in Vegas usually stays in Vegas, but not when you have 227 million followers on Instagram. With a winking reference to being a "Sadie" (married lady) JENNIFER LOPEZ directs fans to her newsletter where she shares pics of her quickie wedding to BEN AFFLECK. "Love is beautiful," she writes. "And it turns out love is patient." Speaking of patience, fans of BEYONCÉ are rewarded for theirs with the release of her long-awaited "Renaissance," her first solo album in six years.

AUGUST

So, we were saying ... Bennifer's second wedding, on Affleck's compound in Georgia, is bigger and fancier. One wedding, one split: KARDASHIAN and DAVIDSON are no longer. In other summer news, the world remembers PRINCESS DIANA, whose shocking death happened 25 years ago, and whose life is being rehashed for a new generation in the current season of "The Crown." Only days after the anniversary, that same Netflix series will pause production as a mark of respect for QUEEN ELIZABETH II as Britain—and the world—mourn the beloved monarch, who dies at age 96 after more than 70 years on the throne.

SEPTEMBER

Mounting political intrigue in Europe, and by that we mean, did spit fly at the Venice premiere of "Don't Worry Darling"? Either way the movie, directed by OLIVIA WILDE and starring her boyfriend (alleged spitter STYLES), is saddled—or blessed?—with more than its share of extracurricular drama. At the EMMYS, behold SHERYL LEE RALPH, who wins for "Abbott Elementary" and schools the crowd on the power of dreams and self-belief. "This is what believing looks like," she says. You know what else believing looks like? Rachel Berry from "Glee"—aka LEA MICHELE—at last getting to play Fanny Brice in "Funny Girl" on Broadway. In sports, with four rueful words that resonate with working moms everywhere, SERENA WILLIAMS says she's stepping aside from tennis, because "something's got to give."

OCTOBER

The second HARVEY WEINSTEIN trial opens in Los Angeles. ADIDAS drops YE, part of a cascade of companies that will sever ties with the rapper over his antisemitic and other troubling comments. The MUSK era begins at TWITTER as the world's richest man carries a sink into the office, to "let that sink in." HEIDI KLUM's Halloween costume is a slimy, glistening rain worm. But before the month worms away from us, let's cede it to SWIFT for dropping her new album, "Midnights" (Spotify's most-streamed album in a single day), then adding seven bonus tracks, then becoming the first artist to occupy all top 10 slots on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. Let THAT sink in! P.S. Celebrity divorce watch: BRADY and) GISELE BUNDCHEN split.

NOVEMBER

Did we say LAST month was Taylor Swift month? Well now, millions of eager fans crowd a presale for her much-awaited Eras Tour, resulting in crashes and endless waits. Ticketmaster cancels the general sale, citing insufficient stock. Multiple state attorneys general announce investigations. Takeaway: People want Taylor Swift tickets. At the multiplex, they also want their Wakanda. "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" meets the double challenge of following up one of the biggest blockbusters in history and losing its biggest star.

DECEMBER

Love 'em or hate 'em, here come HARRY and MEGHAN again, with a Netflix documentary watched very closely by royalty across the pond. Over at Twitter, MUSK says he'll step down as CEO—after polling users—once he finds someone "foolish" enough to replace him. Cameron's "AVATAR" sequel finally appears, 13 years after the original broke records, and yes, moviegoers flock to Pandora once again. And bringing the year full circle, SMITH emerges to promote his new film, "EMANCIPATION," hoping people will forget about … what was it? … at least enough to check out the movie.

In this year of comebacks, will Smith's be the biggest?

Check back with us in 2023.

Secret leads to havoc when family finds out

DEAR ABBY: I was married to a man whose family always seemed to be in each other's business. His 18-year-old niece already had two children when she became pregnant again. She hid it from everyone. When she was eight months gone, she came to me and told me she wanted to adopt the baby out to a family who couldn't have children, because she couldn't handle raising another child.

She begged me not to tell anyone except my husband (her uncle) and asked me to watch her two children overnight while she was at the hospital delivering. She also asked to meet the potential adoptive parents at my home and said she planned to have an open adoption without ever telling her parents. I told her she needed to talk with her mother, but she told me she was desperate for help, so I reluctantly agreed.

Two months after giving birth and placing the baby for adoption, she told her family about it. They became very upset with me. They said I should have told them she was pregnant and that it was my fault they "lost" the child. This ultimately led to my husband divorcing me. To this day, the niece is happy with her decision and participates in the open adoption. Was I wrong to help her and not tell the family?

CONFIDANT IN COLORADO

DEAR CONFIDANT: Your letter proves the truth of the adage, "No good deed goes unpunished." Your ex-husband's niece was an adult at the time her third child was born. You were NOT wrong to help her. That she would betray you after begging for your help shows she wasn't mature enough to handle the responsibilities of parenting yet another child.

You were not responsible for her baby being adopted—SHE was. Her parents have transferred their anger and disappointment in her to you. That it resulted in the failure of your marriage is a shame. I would offer my sympathy, but perhaps you should thank your lucky stars that this dysfunctional family is in the rear-view mirror.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: My neighbors and I are lucky to live in a beautiful community, which is quiet and peaceful. Most of us are retired. Four of us have dogs, and we enjoy meeting up and walking them down our street in the mornings. We never walk before 7:30. Quiet hours in our neighborhood are from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Naturally, we chat as we walk our dogs—at normal voice levels. One of our neighbors likes to sleep until 9 a.m., and he keeps complaining that our conservations wake him up. We try to talk softly. But he complains constantly—and nastily—about "the dog walkers." How can we handle this tactfully? We feel we have the right to enjoy our beautiful neighborhood.

CO-EXISTING IN NORTH CAROLINA

DEAR CO-EXISTING: Of course you do. However, in the spirit of neighborliness, consider walking your dogs in the OPPOSITE DIRECTION. Either that, or stop chatting when you are near his house and resume once you have passed his bedroom window.

■■■■

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

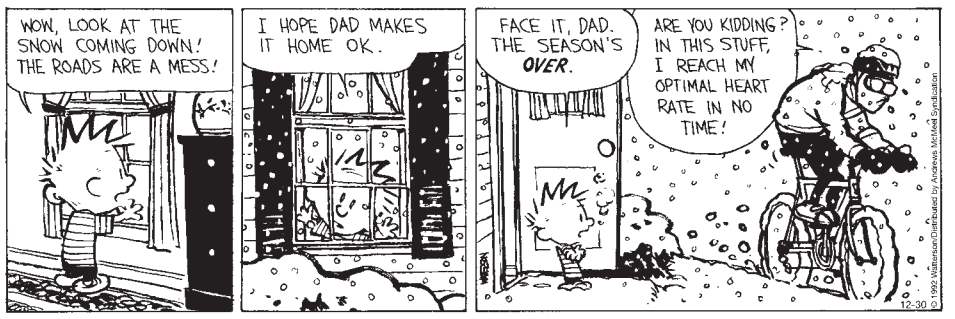
By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


WOW, LOOK AT THE SNOW COMING DOWN! THE ROADS ARE A MESS!
I HOPE DAD MAKES IT HOME OK.
FACE IT, DAD. THE SEASON'S OVER.
ARE YOU KIDDING? IN THIS STUFF, I REACH MY OPTIMAL HEART RATE IN NO TIME!
12-30
© 1992 Watterson/Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

I WORRY I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT
WHAT DOES SHE MEAN BY THAT?
WORRY
JIM DAVIS 12-30
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Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

A WHOLE NEW YEAR. IT'S KIND OF INSPIRING, YOU KNOW?
M'KAY.
NO, REALLY. IT'S LIKE A FRESH, BLANK PAGE, JUST WAITING... FOR ME...
WHAT'S WRONG?
WRITER'S BLOCK FLASHBACK. GIMME A MINUTE.
12-30
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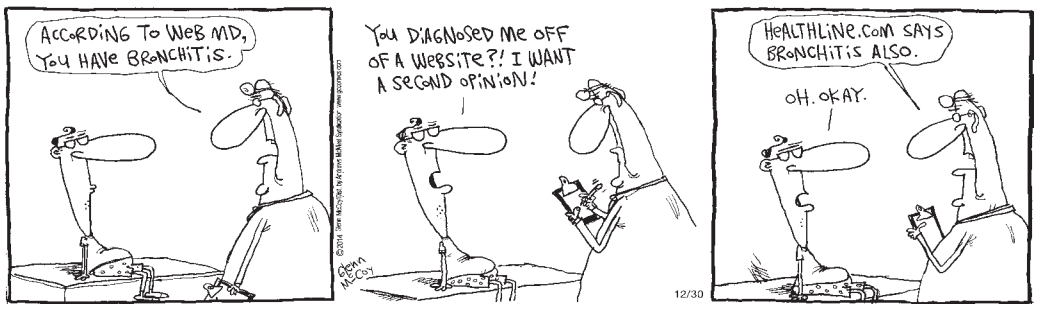
www.gocomics.com

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


ACCORDING TO WEB MD, YOU HAVE BRONCHITIS.
YOU DIAGNOSED ME OFF OF A WEBSITE?! I WANT A SECOND OPINION!
HEALTHLINE.COM SAYS BRONCHITIS ALSO.
OH. OKAY.
12/30

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Spasm
4 Fall bloomers
8 Hindu hero
12 Green prefix
13 Oklahoma tribe
14 "East of Eden" twin
15 Jessica of "Zero Dark Thirty"
17 Gradually withdraw
18 "Oops!"
19 Diminish
20 Taxi ticker
22 Info
24 Job-safety org.
25 Hold back
29 Chinese chairman
30 Postpone
31 Brit's restroom
32 JFK Terminal transport
34 Asset
35 Bigwigs
36 Like forest stones
37 Purse fastener
40 Heart of the matter
41 Loathe
42 Organizer for door openers
46 Oodles
47 "— la Douce"
48 Sony rival
49 Sings like Cardi B
50 Sprint
51 Dine

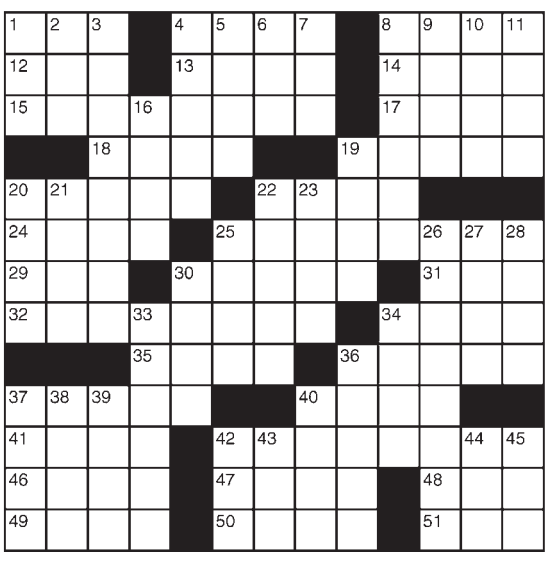
DOWN

1 Sleuth
2 German pronoun
3 Book collaborator
4 Engine
5 Six-sided state
6 French pronoun
7 Capitol VIP
8 Seafood eatery
9 Vicinity
10 Castle defense
11 Green Gables girl
16 — butter
19 Lawyer (Abbr.)
20 NYC gallery
21 Actor Morales
22 Sandwich shops
23 Slippery — eel
25 Harvest
26 Elite athletes
27 Debtors' notes
28 Inquisitive
30 Plumbing problem
33 Boob tubes
34 Ritzy
36 Old Testament book
37 Blacken on a grill
38 In — land
39 Perched on
40 Workout venues
42 Josh
43 Geological period
44 Hosp. section
45 Snooze

Solution time: 25 mins.

K	E	G	S	■	H	E	R	■	A	L	B	A
I	C	E	T	■	I	R	E	■	M	E	L	D
N	O	R	A	■	J	R	S	■	A	N	T	S
G	L	E	N	D	A	■	I	O	T	A	■	■
■	■	■	Z	A	B	A	G	L	I	O	N	E
S	T	R	A	Y	■	U	N	D	■	L	O	W
L	E	A	S	■	R	D	S	■	H	I	V	E
A	R	I	■	M	O	I	■	S	O	N	A	R
P	A	N	N	A	C	O	T	T	A	■	■	■
■	■	W	E	A	K	■	H	A	R	A	R	E
A	L	E	C	■	E	G	O	■	D	R	A	T
S	O	A	K	■	R	A	S	■	E	L	I	A
P	A	R	S	■	S	H	E	■	D	O	L	L

Yesterday's answer 12-30



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Eliza Dushku, 42; Tyrese Gibson, 44; Laila Ali, 45; Meredith Vieira, 69.

Happy Birthday: Preparation and flexibility are mandatory to maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle. Putting a hold on unnecessary projects will ease stress and allow you to pay attention to what's essential to your emotional well-being. Building confidence in yourself and others will bring high returns. Practice moderation and set a good example. Your numbers are 8, 13, 25, 33, 36, 45, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Take note of what everyone around you is doing before you agree to participate. It's in your best interest to be a friendly observer until you know you can keep up and surpass your expectations. Practice makes perfect; prepare to win. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Check out every angle before you indulge in something questionable. When in doubt, take a pass. A decision to update your skills or learn something new will inspire you to reach out to an expert. Plan a surprise for someone you love. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* A kind gesture will be appreciated and reciprocated. Refuse to let your ego or emotions step in and cause upset instead of stability. Choose to take the high road, regardless of what others do or say. Taking responsibility will pay off. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Steer clear of sensitive issues. Emotional discussions will lead to trouble. Keep a positive attitude, and do your best to make others feel comfortable. Be a good listener, and you'll gain access to confidential information. Romance is encouraged. ✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Set your sights on what you want to accomplish, and don't stop until you are confident you've done your best. The difference you make with a last-minute adjustment will pay off and encourage you to be more spontaneous in all aspects of life. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* You don't have to spend money to impress others. Your charm and hands-on help will lead to opportunities for positive change and better relationships. A short trip, friendly gathering or constructive research will set you on the right path. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Put yourself to the test and take on a challenge that requires agility, strength and discipline to navigate your way to the end. The satisfaction and results you get will give you the boost you need to offset any negativity you encounter. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Talks will resolve problems you want to clear up before the end of the year. Be the one to start the conversation on a positive note and make suggestions. The input will be better than anticipated but emotionally costly. Listen, make amends and move along. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* You can be entertaining without going overboard. Watch how much you eat and drink, and keep your spending within a budget. Make your presence notable for your humor, generous spirit and assistance. Mistakes will be costly and require damage control. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* You'll require patience and common sense when dealing with money, friends and relatives. Have faith in yourself. Pay attention to what you do, how you look and what you want to achieve. Make a change that makes your living space more convenient. ✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Fine-tune your plans for the upcoming year. A breakdown will help you budget and prepare to reach your goal. A positive adjustment at home will make it easier for you to implement the changes that will make your life easier. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Take note of what others say, but don't respond unless you have something positive to contribute. Arguing will waste time and leave you in limbo regarding your plans. Choose to be helpful, supportive and kind. A romantic gesture is encouraged. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are friendly, conscientious and practical. You are responsive and cooperative.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

			8			9		
			7			5		
5	2	6	9			3		
						6	4	3
7	1	3						
		4			6	2	8	7
		5			3			
		8			1			

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 12/30

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

9	2	1	5	4	6	7	8	3
6	3	4	7	9	8	2	5	1
5	8	7	1	2	3	6	9	4
1	7	5	9	6	4	8	3	2
4	9	3	8	1	2	5	7	6
8	6	2	3	7	5	4	1	9
3	1	6	4	5	7	9	2	8
2	5	9	6	8	1	3	4	7
7	4	8	2	3	9	1	6	5

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

SOME LANGUAGES TO LEARN Solution: 9 letters

T	I	N	D	I	A	L	O	G	C	I	B	A	R	A
S	S	N	I	U	C	G	I	B	A	J	N	U	P	Y
A	P	G	D	R	T	A	R	M	I	K	M	A	Q	M
O	O	A	E	I	A	C	S	E	O	H	C	E	A	A
B	K	M	N	R	G	D	H	N	E	H	S	Y	V	R
D	E	O	A	I	M	E	N	T	E	K	A	T	E	A
I	N	O	R	P	S	A	N	A	O	N	M	I	R	C
V	N	E	A	E	U	H	N	O	M	E	U	R	S	Q
E	A	C	M	R	A	D	B	A	U	E	S	K	E	U
R	T	L	D	A	A	N	U	E	N	S	E	S	I	I
S	A	U	U	E	S	I	L	N	A	A	D	N	N	E
I	L	A	T	E	K	A	R	I	G	Ⓛ	R	A	O	S
T	K	A	R	I	S	E	D	S	S	U	Ⓛ	S	L	C
Y	Y	G	O	L	U	E	V	I	T	A	N	Ⓐ	O	E
F	A	C	T	U	A	L	T	A	U	H	A	N	Ⓒ	E

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Acquiesce, Agree, Airs, Amused, Apachean, Arabic, Arise, Asks, Aymara, Boast, Books, Call, Colonies, Dialog, Diversity, Dutch, Echoes, Eulogy, Factual, German, Indigenous, Korean, Late, Mandarin, Mapudungun, Mayan, Mikmaq, Nahuatl, Native, Pacts, Punjabi, Said, Sale, Same, Sanskrit, Seen, Spanish, Spoken, Sranan, Talk, Urdu, Values, Verse

Yesterday's Answer: Foam Pit

To purchase **WONDERWORD** books, visit www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

Pistons overcame scuffle, ejections to beat Magic, 121-101

DETROIT (AP)—Alec Burks scored a season-high 32 points, Saddiq Bey added 28 and the Detroit Pistons overcame the ejection of two players after a scuffle to beat the Orlando Magic 121-101 on Wednesday night and snap a six-game losing streak.

Killian Hayes and Hamadou Diallo were thrown out after the fight just before halftime. Moritz Wagner was tossed for Orlando and took a shot to the back of the head from Hayes and appeared to be briefly knocked out.

Jalen Duren finished with seven points and 18 rebounds for the Pistons, who got 76 points from their bench.

Franz Wagner had 19 points for Orlando, which lost on back-to-back nights after winning eight of nine.

With 33 seconds left in the first half, Moritz Wagner hip-checked Hayes into the Pistons bench as they chased a loose ball. With Wagner facing the players on the Detroit bench, every Orlando player in uniform raced to the spot.

Wagner was ejected for a flagrant foul, while Hayes and Hamadou Diallo were ejected for their actions in the aftermath. Hayes got back up and struck Wagner in the back of the head, knocking him into the bench.

Nets 108, Hawks 107

In Atlanta, Kyrie Irving scored 15 of his 28 points in the fourth quarter, Kevin Durant had 26 points and a season-high 16 rebounds and Brooklyn beat Atlanta for its 10th straight victory.

The winning streak is the longest in the NBA this season and the Nets' longest since they took 10 in a row in 2005-06. The 2002-03 team also won 10 straight. The franchise record is 14, set in 2003-04 and matched in 2005-06.

Brooklyn (23-12) has won 14 of 15.

The injury-riddled Hawks (17-18) were without leading scorer Trae Young, leading rebounder Clint Capela and starting forward De'Andre Hunter. Dejounte Murray scored 24 points for Atlanta.

Bulls 119, Bucks 113, OT

In Chicago, DeMar DeRozan scored 42 points and Chicago rallied to beat Giannis Antetokounmpo and Milwaukee in overtime.

The Bulls trailed by 15 early in the fourth quarter, only to pull even in the closing minute of regulation. DeRozan scored 10 in overtime, Nikola Vucevic hit a 3 in the extra period and the Bulls beat one of the NBA's best teams after losing to one of the worst — Houston — two nights earlier.

Antetokounmpo matched a season high with 45 points and set one with 20 rebounds. He also committed two turnovers in the closing seconds of regulation, and the Bucks extended their season-high losing streak to four.

Pelicans 119, Timberwolves 118

In New Orleans, Zion Williamson scored a career-high 43 points, capping it with New Orleans' final 14 points in the last 2:44, and the Pelicans outlasted Minnesota for its fourth straight victory.

AP

Orlando Magic center Wendell Carter Jr. (34) passes the ball as Detroit Pistons center Isaiah Stewart defends during the first half of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2022, in Detroit.

Anthony Edwards, who scored 27 points for Minnesota, missed a baseline fade for the win as time expired in a game in which the Wolves led most of the way, and by as many as 11 points, before losing their fourth straight.

Trey Murphy III scored 21 points, going 5 of 6 from 3, and CJ McCollum had 20 points for the Pelicans. Jonas Valanciunas had 12 points and 11 rebounds. D'Angelo Russell had 27 points for Minnesota.

Kings 127, Nuggets 126

In Sacramento, Calif., Malik Monk scored 33 points, including the tiebreaking free throw with 0.7 seconds left, and Sacramento came back from down 19 points late in the third quarter to beat Denver.

Nikola Jokic scored 40 points for Denver but missed a 3-pointer at the top of the key as time expired.

De'Aaron Fox had 31 points and 13 assists, while Domantas Sabonis returned to the lineup with 31 points, 10 rebounds and five assists. The Kings had lost three of four at home.

The Nuggets played without Jamal Murray, Aaron Gordon and Bruce Brown. They had their five-game winning streak snapped.

Warriors 112, Jazz 107

In San Francisco, Jordan Poole scored 26 points and converted a key layup with 1:27 left and undermanned Golden State rallied to beat Utah.

Ty Jerome hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with 5:18 to play after his own steal, then made a key rebound to help set up Donte DiVincenzo's 3 the next time down as Golden State got another big performance from the backups.

DiVincenzo scored 19 points and Jerome 17 with the Warriors completing a back-to-back minus starters Stephen Curry, Klay Thompson and Andrew Wiggins.

Lauri Markkanen scored 29 points and had seven 3-pointers and a season-best 16 rebounds for the Jazz.

Heat 112, Lakers 98

In Miami, Jimmy Butler scored 27 points, Bam Adebayo added 23 points and 14 rebounds and Miami beat Los Angeles to move over .500.

Tyler Herro had 18 points and nine assists for the Heat (18-17). Caleb Martin scored 13 points and Gabe Vincent added 12.

LeBron James had 27 points, nine rebounds and six assists for the Lakers, playing on the second night of a back to back. Russell Westbrook and Dennis Schroder each had 15 for the Lakers.

Wizards 125, Suns 102

In Washington, Rui Hachimura matched his career high with 30 points and converted a pivotal three-point play to help Washington beat Phoenix in a meeting of depleted teams.

Kristaps Porzingis and Kyle Kuzma each had 22 points for Washington as three-time Wizards All-Star Bradley Beal sat out with hamstring soreness.

Deandre Ayton scored 31 points for the Suns, who said Wednesday that All-Star guard Devin Booker will miss at least four weeks because of a left groin strain. Phoenix also is missing Cam Johnson, Cam Payne and Landry Shamet.

Analysis: In wide-open NBA, uncertainty is only certainty

DENVER (AP)—There was a time when an NBA team had some sense of how things were shaping up by Christmas. Even if just a glimmer of its place in the overall landscape.

Then the Boston Celtics made a run to the 2022 NBA Finals after being under .500 about this time last year.

Nobody is feeling too cozy this winter in the injury-riddled NBA.

"I don't know if you can make any sense of anything nowadays," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said.

Going into Tuesday's games, Boston sits atop the Eastern Conference while Denver leads the West. But both races could simply depend on who heals the fastest or who can stay the healthiest.

The reigning NBA champion Golden State Warriors are missing Stephen Curry (shoulder), the Los Angeles Lakers are without Anthony Davis (foot) and the Minnesota Timberwolves are minus Karl-Anthony Towns (calf).

The Phoenix Suns might be down Devin Booker for a bit after he reaggravated his groin Sunday, and Domantas Sabonis is day-to-day with a hand injury as the Sacramento Kings try to make the playoffs for the first time since 2005-06.

Meanwhile, Jayson Tatum has the Celtics humming along, and Nuggets big man Nikola Jokic is threatening to join Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain and Larry Bird as the only players to win three consecutive MVP awards.

Despite those two playing some of the best basketball in the NBA, injuries have led to some early season chaos.

Four teams are within three games of the first-place Celtics in the East, and eight clubs are within four games of No. 1 Denver in the West.

"The talent and skill levels may change because of injuries," Suns coach Monty Williams said. "But playing with a great level of competition should never change for any team."

So it goes with LeBron James, who turns 38 on Friday and sits 630 points away from breaking Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's career scoring mark. The Lakers are currently well back in the West race and James is in danger of missing the playoffs for a second straight season. It won't be easy to avoid that, with Davis sidelined for an undetermined time.

Then again, the Lakers have already climbed out of 0-5 and 2-10 holes this season.

"How many times are you going to try to dig yourself out until there's too much dirt on you?" James said. "There are ways we can be better."

It worked for the Celtics, who at this time a year ago — Dec. 26, 2021 — were 16-17 and sitting ninth in the East. But the holiday wasn't a good barometer, as they went 35-14 the rest of the way to earn the No. 2 seed and advance to the finals. They're surging again this season behind Tatum, who has emerged as an MVP favorite as he tries to unseat Jokic.

"One game at a time and not looking too far ahead," Malone said with roughly 40% of the season complete. "Just trying to get better every single day."

Healthier, too.

That's the case with the Nuggets, who are steadily seeing Jamal Murray's explosiveness return as he makes his way back from an ACL injury. Michael Porter Jr. has recovered from a heel ailment that kept him out for a month.

The Warriors are minus Curry for at least two more weeks. Towns could be back for Minnesota in the not-so-distant future. Booker's groin injury could be a concern for the Suns, who are already without Cameron Payne (foot) and Cameron Johnson (knee). Booker reaggravated the injury early in a 128-125 overtime loss at Denver on Christmas Night. He's the team's leading scorer.

"It's tough," teammate Chris Paul said. "We've got to hold the fort down until he's ready."

Sort of flying under the radar these days are the Los Angeles Clippers, a team that's rounding back into elite form. They're taking a cautious approach with Kawhi Leonard (knee), who scored 28 points in a loss at Philadelphia last Friday.

Don't overlook the play of Shake Milton, who has given the 76ers a nice boost off the bench. Jerami Grant has been a welcome addition in Portland, averaging 21.8 points per game to give a big hand to Damian Lillard. Zion Williamson has been doing Zion Williamson-type things — before recently entering the NBA's COVID-19 health and safety protocols — for the New Orleans Pelicans, who trail the Nuggets by a half-game.

Then there's Aaron Gordon, the high-flying Denver forward who retooled his game in the offseason and is shooting a career-best 61.1% from the floor. He had several highlight-reel dunks in a win over the Suns on Christmas, including a backward jam, an alley-oop slam and one at the end where he nearly flew over Landry Shamet.

Gordon's game has taken some pressure off Jokic, the 7-foot center averaging 25.4 points, 11 rebounds and a career-best 9.4 assists.

"This team is one of the teams that has the potential to be the only team to win at the end of the season," Gordon said. "When you have a team like that, and you have players like that, we make everybody better around us. We're trying to play for each other. We're trying to win for each other."

Djokovic says no hard feelings over Australian deportation

ADELAIDE, Australia (AP)—Novak Djokovic has reiterated his earlier comments that he bears no hard feelings on his return to Australia after his visa cancellation and subsequent deportation in January ahead of the Australian Open tennis tournament.

Djokovic was deported almost 12 months ago after arriving unvaccinated against COVID-19 at a time when the country was still subject to strict quarantine regulations and proof of vaccination.

Those regulations have since been lifted and in November, the Australian government overturned the three-year ban that came with Djokovic's deportation and granted him a visa to return for the Australian Open beginning Jan. 16.

Djokovic arrived back in Australia on Tuesday ahead of the Adelaide International, where he is scheduled to play next week.

"It's great to be back in Australia," he said Thursday. "It's a country where I've had tremendous success in my career, particularly in Melbourne. It's by far my most successful Grand Slam. I'm hoping that everything is going to be positive. Obviously (fan reaction) is not something that I can predict.

AP

Serbia's Novak Djokovic makes a backhand return during a practice session ahead of the Adelaide International Tennis tournament in Adelaide, Australia, Thursday, Dec. 29, 2022.

"I'll do my best to play good tennis and bring good emotions and good feelings to the crowd."

Djokovic said he still has difficulty forgetting his deportation.

"Obviously what happened 12 months ago was not easy for me, for my family, team, anybody who is close to me. It's obviously disappointing to leave the country like that," he said.

"You can't forget those events. It's one of these things that stays with you for I guess the rest of your life. It's something that I've never experienced before and hopefully never again. But it is a valuable life experience for me and something that as I said will stay there, but I have to move on."

Djokovic has won the Australian Open a record nine times, including the last three times he played. Rafael Nadal won the 2022 title in Djokovic's absence.

Roberto Clemente remains Latino legend 50 years after death

By ALANIS THAMES
AP SPORTS WRITER

When Puerto Ricans belt the name Roberto Clemente in song, they want the world to understand their pride, unity and culture. Clemente, for them, is the pinnacle of what it means to be a true Puerto Rican. His name is in their songs, and kids read about his story in school. His picture hangs in the houses of many Latino ballplayers.

"When we're being challenged, and they're trying to figure out who we are, the answer is we all wear No. 21," said Luis Clemente, Roberto's middle son. "We are Roberto Clemente, so you know who we are. This is the face of what makes a Puerto Rican."

Fifty years after his death, Roberto Clemente, the skillful outfielder with the Pittsburgh Pirates, remains one of the most revered figures in Puerto Rico and Latin America. His graceful flare and powerful arm were unrivaled in his era, but his humanitarian efforts are perhaps his greatest legacy. Half a century after he played, many of today's Latino baseball players credit him for paving the way.

"The name Roberto Clemente is something that fills us with passion and admiration," said Miami Marlins pitcher Sandy Alcantara, who was born in the Dominican Republic. "Since he was one of the Latin players that did so much for us here in America, not only here but in all of Latin America, I think he is a living legend."

Clemente died at age 38 on Dec. 31, 1972, when his plane crashed off the coast of Puerto Rico as he was delivering relief supplies to earthquake victims in Nicaragua.

He died a future Baseball Hall of Famer, with exactly 3,000 hits, four National League batting titles, 12 Gold Gloves, an MVP award, two World Series championships and 15 All-Star appearances.

He was passionate about his Puerto Rican roots, and he spoke loudly about the racism he experienced as a Black Latino during a career that paralleled the civil rights movement.

"That was an expression of Clemente's angst of how many saw him," said baseball historian Adrian Burgos Jr., who focuses on the experience of Latinos in baseball. "Outside of that superstar ballplayer, they saw a Black man, a Black Latino, when he began to speak."

Clemente entered the majors after Jackie Robinson broke the sport's color barrier, and he was unprepared for what he faced when he left Puerto Rico.

According to demographics data compiled by the Society for American Baseball Research, white players made up 90.7% of MLB players when Pittsburgh selected Clemente from the then-Brooklyn Dodgers in the 1954 Rule 5 draft. African American players made up 5.6%, while Latino players made up 3.7%.

AP

Roberto Clemente of the Pittsburgh Pirates is seen in Tampa, Fla., March 3, 1963. Fifty years after his death, Clemente, the skillful outfielder, remains one of the most revered figures in Puerto Rico and Latin America.

When Clemente reported for Pirates spring training in Florida, Black players weren't allowed to eat in the same restaurants as their white teammates after games and often had to wait for food to be brought back to them on the bus.

Clemente refused to be treated like a second-class citizen, and he demanded the same mindset from his Black teammates.

"He would even tell the rest of his teammates, 'Those of you who eat food from this place, we're gonna go at it,'" Luis Clemente said. "And they'd say, 'Roberto, we're starving. We have to eat something.' He'd say, 'I don't care. ... If I'm not good enough to be served food at that restaurant, then that food is not good enough to feed ourselves.'"

Clemente understood the impact of his voice, which he used to denounce racism, oftentimes in his native Spanish language. His statements were translated in broken English. His pride and demeanor were often misunderstood.

"There's all kinds of cultural dissonance in terms of a sense of who he is and the more traditional take on ballplayers for these taciturn, tobacco-spitting white guys," said Rob Ruck, author of "Raceball: How the Major Leagues Colonized the Black and Latin Game."

Clemente spoke about political and social issues with Martin Luther King Jr. He was passionate about creating equal access for Latinos and often went back to Puerto Rico to host free baseball clinics for underprivileged kids.

The Roberto Clemente Award is given each year to a player for charitable work in the community. Dodgers third baseman Justin Turner was this year's winner.

Clemente's dedication to humanitarianism lives today through his family and the Roberto Clemente Foundation, which delivered food and aid to families in Puerto Rico when Hurricane Fiona ripped through the island earlier this year.

"That is the true Clemente legacy," Luis Clemente said, "is how you help others and how you make others understand how important they are in society."

The same can be said for today's Latino players, he added, as he feels their dedication to their home countries started, in part, with his father.

"Dad set the example of being thankful for what God provides," Luis Clemente said, "for the opportunity of becoming a Major League Baseball player. ... These players for the most part, they have had it rough. They understand what living in need is and they know how to share their blessing."

Today's MLB and cultural landscape look quite different from when Clemente played, but diversity issues still exist.

On opening day 2022, 38% of players on active 30-man rosters were people of color, per The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport. The percentage of African American players (7.2%) is the lowest it has been in over 30 years, while the number of Hispanic and Latino players (28.5%) continues to increase.

On Sept. 15, when the league celebrated its annual Roberto Clemente Day, the Tampa Bay Rays made MLB history by starting nine Latin American players against the Toronto Blue Jays.

Latino stars like Ronald Acuña Jr. and Fernando Tatis Jr. have helped usher in a livelier era for MLB, one in which boisterous Latino players are more comfortable than ever showing off the energy and flair more typical in their home countries than in the U.S.

Track and field team shines in Oceania Championships

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI National Athletics Team in the 2022 Oceania Athletics Championships make a funny pose. From left, Michael Mancao, Zarinae Sapong, Liamwar Rangamar, coach Dr. Ron Snyder, Tiana Cabrera, Tania Tan, and Orrin Pharmin.

6 Before the craziness of the Mini Games, the CNMI National Athletics Team gave a preview of the medal rush to come when they won three medals in the 2022 Oceania Athletics Championships in Mackay, Australia.

Tania Tan won gold in the 10-kilometer run and settled for silver in her favorite 5-km event, while Tiana Cabrera won a bronze medal in the 3,000m run.

While not counted in the overall medal count, CNMI masters athlete Orrin Pharmin also made waves in the Land Down Under after collecting two gold medals, five silver medals, and a bronze medal.

Pharmin got gold in the 110m hurdles and high jump, while his silver medals came in the shot put, 60m, 100m, 200m, and 400m. His lone bronze came in the javelin.

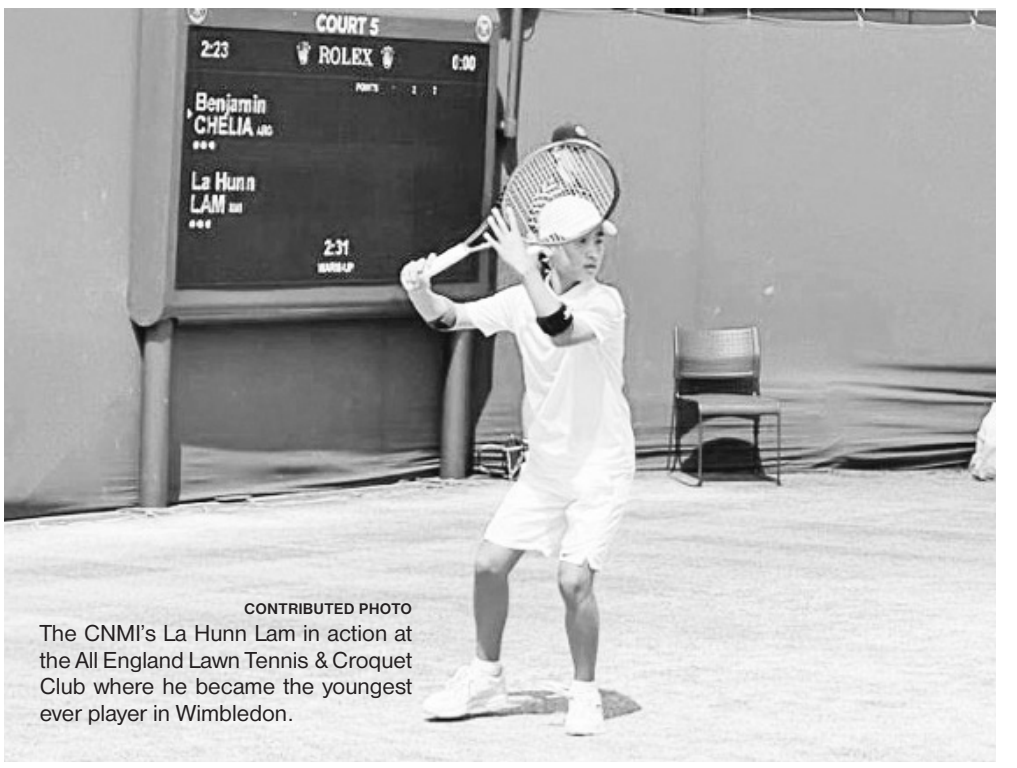
La Hunn is youngest to ever play in Wimbledon

7 Last July, the CNMI's La Hunn Lam made history when the 12-year-old became the youngest player ever to compete at Wimbledon.

"I felt nervous and excited. However, as a tennis player it was an honor to participate in Wimbledon. It was a dream come true indeed. Playing against players from all over the world, who are the top in their country, is definitely the best part of my Wimbledon experience," he later told *Saipan Tribune*.

The 12-year-old said aside from going up against the best 14 and under tennis players in the world, playing in Wimbledon also afforded him the chance to see and meet the best tennis players in the world.

Lam and another Oceania netter, Aishi Das of New Zealand, were selected by the Oceania Tennis Federation to represent the region in the Inaugural 14U Championships at Wimbledon.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI's La Hunn Lam in action at the All England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club where he became the youngest ever player in Wimbledon.

Run Saipan Alpha resets record in Christmas relay

LAO ZHANG

The Run Saipan Alpha team, from left, Tania Tan, Heimanarii Lai San, Sildrey Veloria, Keith Longuski, and Keith Ketola.

8 Just last Saturday, Run Saipan's Alpha team broke the record in the Northern Marianas Athletics' 41st Annual Christmas Island Relay.

In a mission for redemption, Tania Tan, Keith Ketola, Heimanarii Lai San, Keith Longuski, and Sildrey Veloria finished the 13.7-mile course from Pacific Islands Club Saipan to the Last Command Post in Marpi in 1:19.52.

The team's average split times per mile was an eye-popping 5:46/mile or 3:34/km. Individually, Veloria ran a 5:59/mile; Ketola sprinted a 4:55/mile; Tan ran a 5:45/mile; Longuski ran a 5:30/mile; and Lai San ran a 6:30/mile.

CNMI dominate NPRC in Guam

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI delegation to the 2022 North Pacific Regional Championships in Guam pose for a group photo at the Guam National Tennis Center in Dededo.

9 The CNMI once again stamped its class in the 2022 North Pacific Regional Championships last July.

This, after 15 netters punched their tickets to the 2022 Pacific Oceania Junior Championships in Lautoka, Fiji.

These were boys 16's Minsoo "David" Kwon, girls 16's Serin Chung and Savita Sikkel, boys 14's La Hunn Lam, Nason Wessel, Henry Choi, and Siwoo Lee, girls 14's Hoo Wang, Hannah Chae, and Anna Kwon, boys 12's Yutaka Kadokura, Ian Chae, Ryan Choi, and Jihun Park, and girls 12's Lina Tsukagoshi. Later, Irin Chung and June Yu were granted wildcard entries by the Oceania Tennis Federation to the POJC.

Return of full-time interscholastic sports

10 School year 2022-2023 saw the return of soccer moms—and stage dads who always know better than the referees—with the resumption of full-time interscholastic sports.

Two years of stop-and-go leagues that sometimes were reduced to tournaments due to COVID-19 became things of the past.

Aside from futbal (as the rest of the world calls it), interscholastic sports that made their uninterrupted comebacks this year included volleyball, basketball, badminton, and cross country.

Much of the credit goes to Public School System Athletic Program director Nick Gross and his merry band of helpers.

LEIGH GASES

Six-time Public School System Girls High School Volleyball League champions Grace Christian Academy poses for a photo with their trophy and medals after their championship game against Saipan International School last Oct. 22 at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

EAFF conclave and inauguration of new pitch

2 It was not the World Cup, but last month saw the CNMI host several important East Asian Football Federation meetings—the 68th EAFF Executive Committee Meeting, 32nd EAFF Finance Committee Meeting, and 1st EAFF Marketing Committee Meeting—as well as the 20th EAFF Anniversary Celebration.

It only means that the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association has made its mark in the EAFF as the islands continue to move forward in the sport of football.

October then saw NMIFA hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the NMIFA Expansion Project at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

The $2-million pitch mirrors the regular-sized pitch built in Phase 1, which is an artificial 80 x 120-yard grass turf with under drainage, team benches with clear covers, and lighting.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

East Asian Football Federation president Du Zhaocai, fifth left, and Northern Mariana Islands Football Association president Jerry Tan, fourth left, shake hands, while other EAFF Executive Committee officers and members look on after they led the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the opening of the NMIFA Expansion Project at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville last Nov. 11.

Swimmers break 9 records in Melbourne

3 Despite no official swimming pool to train in for years now, the CNMI National Swimming Team broke nine national records in the 2022 FINA World Championships in Melbourne.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, Jinnosuke Suzuki, Shoko Litulumar, Isaiah Aleksenko, and Maria Batallones pose at the entrance to the pool facility of the 2022 FINA World Championships in Melbourne.

Isaiah Aleksenko broke four NMI records—the 100m butterfly, 200m butterfly, 50m freestyle, and 50m backstroke.

Jinnosuke Suzuki eclipsed his own record in the 200m freestyle, while Maria Batallones obliterated the old record in the 50m breastroke and also reset the previous mark in the 100m breastroke.

In the relay, the quartet of Aleksenko, Suzuki, Batallones, and Shoko Litulumar swam a new standard in the 50m x 4 mixed free relay.

Carol Lee and partner top-ranked in doubles

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI's Carol Lee in action for the George Tech Yellow Jackets in this file photo.

4 Last September saw the CNMI's very own Carol Lee form half of the Intercollegiate Tennis Association's No. 1-ranked women's doubles team along with Georgia Tech teammate Kate Sharabura.

As Georgia Tech's No. 1 player, Lee posted a 25-8 overall record and 18-5 dual ledger last season. The All-Atlantic Coast Conference first team selection climbed as high as No. 22 in the ITA national rankings and earned an at-large bid to the NCAA Singles Championships.

Lee also made the preseason singles rankings at No. 16, where she was joined by two other Yellow Jackets—Kylie Bilchev at No. 73 and Ava Hrastar at No. 118.

Cagebelles take silver, cagers bronze in Guam

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI National Women's National Team took home the silver medal in the 2022 FIBA Micronesian Cup in Guam last June.

5 While they weren't part of the Mini Games, the Northern Mariana Islands Basketball Federation made sure the CNMI men's and women's national teams as well as their junior counterparts got some action this year when they took part in the 2022 FIBA Micronesian Cup and FIBA U15 Oceania Championship, both held in Guam.

The CNMI Women's National Team made the most of it by bringing home the silver medal in the 2022 FIBA Micronesian Cup last June.

The CNMI Men's National Team, meanwhile, salvaged the bronze medal in the same tournament.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI National Men's National Team took the bronze medal in the 2022 FIBA Micronesian Cup in Guam last June.

Pistons overcame scuffle, ejections to beat Magic, 121-101

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2022 SPORTS STORY OF THE YEAR

PACIFIC MINI GAMES

QUINN BREADY

Team NMI are all smiles while carrying the CNMI, Pacific Games, and U.S. flags during the closing ceremony of the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 last June 25 at the Oleai Sports Complex.

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

If there was a category for sports story of the decade, the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 would take the cake.

Since there's none, *Saipan Tribune* is gladly naming it the 2022 Sports Story of the Year—and by a mile!

Despite only having a little over two years to organize the quadrennial event, the CNMI not only delivered one of the best hosting duties of any Mini Games (some would say including the Pacific Games), but also had its best finish ever in terms of medals won.

With 16 gold, 13 silver, and nine bronze medals, Team NMI finished third in the overall medal standings behind Pacific Games powerhouses and Olympic nations Papua New Guinea and Tahiti. The 16 gold medals won and 38 total also surpasses the CNMI's total in all Mini Games and Pacific Games it previously took part in.

To add to the superlatives, this year's Mini Games was truly CNMI-wide, as Tinian (volleyball) and Rota (triathlon) also got to host the summer sports spectacle.

Weightlifting handed Team NMI 11 gold medals, with Ray Santos and David Barnhouse getting three apiece; Angel San Nicolas and Jason Limes gaining two each; and Joey Colisao adding one.

Tennis provided the home team three gold medals, with ATP Tour veteran Colin Sinclair prevailing in the men's singles and teaming up with Robbie Schorr in the men's doubles finals win. Sinclair, Schorr, Bobby Cruz, and Colin Ramsey also topped the men's team event.

Golf's Zhimin Jin also made it to the gold medalists list with her victory in the women's individual event, while the NMI National Baseball Team capped the hosts' gold rush with a 12-9 finals triumph over archrival Guam in the Mini Games' penultimate day.

Weightlifting also gave Team NMI the most silvers with 10 (three each from Leo Apelo and Antonette Labausa, two from Colisao, and one apiece from Leowel Cristobal and Angel San Nicolas). Athletics added two, thanks to Orrin Pharmin and Denise Myers, while beach volleyball's Logan Mister and Andrew Johnson chipped in one.

For the bronze medal tally, athletics' Dennis Borja and the women's 4x100m relay team (Casey Cruz, Zarinae Sapong, Maria Quitugua, Kina Rangamar) contributed one each. Golf's Franco Santos, J.J. Atalig, Joshua Atalig, and Zhi Yun Li, triathlon's Isaiah Aleksenko, Leo Wania, Kathy Ruszala, and Heather Brook, tennis' Sinclair and Isabel Heras, and the *va'a* women's V12 team (Danica Calvo, Elaine Sablan, Elizabeth Tenorio, Erryne Dasalla, Gerlyn Libunao, Heather Calderwood, Jenisha Dubrall, Kaya Rasa, Rica Concepcion, Teresa Sablan, Victoria Aldan, Vinalynn Oronigo), and weightlifting's Riella Ann Ichiou and Jason Limes were the other bronze medalists.

And on the final day of competition, Team NMI went on to win medals in all nine sports featured in the Mini Games, as badminton's Janelle Pangilinan and Jenine Savellano prevailed in their bronze medal match in the women's doubles against Tahiti's Hortensia Manzanal and Waianuhea Teheura, 21-12, 21-9.

And to think the CNMI almost gave back the hosting duties (Oh it did, only to take it back when it was allowed to host a scaled down Mini Games).

So, congratulations to the CNMI and its athletes for making June 17-25, 2022 not only the best nine days in sports—but one could argue—the best week and two days in the islands' history.

QUINN BREADY

From left, Pacific Games Council CEO Pacific Games Council CEO Andrew Minogue, Senate President Jude Hofschneider (R-Saipan), Pacific Mini Games Organizing Committee CEO Vicente "Ben" Babauta, Pacific Games Council president Vidya Lakhan, Pacific Mini Games Organizing Committee chair Marco Peter, and Northern Marianas Sports Association president Jerry Tan during the closing ceremony of the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 last June 25 at the Oleai Sports Complex.